

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

THE
TIDE OF FORTUNE
TWELVE HISTORICAL MINIATURES

STEFAN ZWEIG
Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul

HALLAM EDITION



CASELL
and Company Limited
LONDON TORONTO MELBOURNE
SYDNEY AUCKLAND

Part of this book appeared in Germany in 1927
under the title *Sternstunden der Menschheit*

First published in Great Britain, 1940
First published in the Hallam Edition, 1955

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
EBENEZER BAYLIS AND SON, LTD., THE
TRINITY PRESS, WORCESTER, AND LONDON
F.1054

FOREWORD

LIKE Nature herself, history, which is the spiritual mirror of Nature, assumes infinitely diversified and incalculable forms. It laughs at method, and contemptuously disregards laws. Now, like water, it seems to flow towards a goal; at another time it pursues chance happenings that are the sport of the wind. Oftentimes it builds up epochs with the steadfast patience of a growing crystal—till a dramatic instant comes when crowded spheres are generated in a flash. Always creative, it is in such tense moments of compressed formation that the artistry of the historic process is revealed; for though a million energies animate our world, it is only in these explosive incidents that their significance becomes unmistakable. From out centuries I have chosen twelve such fateful hours, and have not tinted their spiritual truth with any colours of my own mixing. When history produces finished work, no help is needed from the writer's hand; honest recital is all-sufficient.

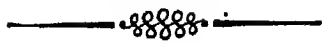
There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Julius Caesar.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM . Dec. 7, 43 B.C. (Cicero's Death)	I
THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM . May 29, 1453	25
FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY . . Sept. 25, 1513 (Nufiez de Balboa discovers the Pacific)	52
THE LORD GAVE THE WORD . Aug. 21, 1741 (Handel's <i>Messiah</i>)	78
THE GENIUS OF ONE NIGHT . . April 25, 1792	101
THE DECISIVE HOUR AT WATERLOO June 18, 1815 (Grouchy obeys Orders)	118
THE MARIENBAD ELEGY . . Sept. 5, 1823 (Goethe's last Love)	134
ELDORADO Jan. 12, 1848 (Sutter's Gold)	144
FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC Aug. 5, 1858 (Cyrus Field's Cable)	156
QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE . Jan. 16, 1912 (Scott reaches the Pole)	178
THE SEALED TRAIN . . . April 9, 1917 (Lenin leaves Zürich)	198
WILSON'S FAILURE . . . April 15, 1919	210
INDEX	229

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM



WHEN a shrewd but not particularly courageous man encounters one stronger than himself, the wisest thing he can do is turn aside, and unashamedly wait until the road is free. Marcus Tullius Cicero, in his day the leading humanist of the Roman realm, a master of oratory and a defender of the right, devoted his best energies for thirty years to the service of the Law and the maintenance of the Republic; his speeches are chiselled in the annals of history and his literary works form an essential constituent of the Latin tongue. In Catiline he fought anarchy; in Verres he assailed corruption; in the victorious generals he perceived the threat of dictatorship, and by assailing them incurred their enmity; his treatise *De Republica* was long regarded as the best and most ethical description of the ideal form of State. But now he had to encounter a man stronger than himself. Julius Caesar, whose rise (being himself older and more renowned) he had at first confidently promoted, had betwixt night and morning used the Gallic legions to gain supreme control in Italy. Being in absolute command of the military forces, Caesar need merely stretch forth his hand to seize the kingly crown which Mark Antony had offered him before the assembled populace. Vainly had Cicero contested Caesar's assumption of autocratic power when Caesar defied the Law by crossing the Rubicon. Unavailingly did he try to rally the last champions of liberty against the aggressor. As always,

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

cohorts proved stronger than words. Cæsar, an intellectual no less than a man of action, triumphed all along the line; and had he been as vengful as most dictators, he could, after his overwhelming success, have easily crushed this obstinate defender of the Law, or at least have reduced Cicero to outlawry. But Cæsar's magnanimity at this juncture was even more remarkable than his previous victories had been. Having got the better of his adversary, he was content with a gentle reproof, sparing Cicero's life, while significantly advising retirement from the political stage. Let Cicero henceforward be content, like everyone else, with the role of a mute and submissive observer of affairs of State.

What could be better for a man of outstanding intelligence than exclusion from public, from political life? Thus the thinker, the artist, is debarred from a sphere which can be mastered only by brutality or by cunning, and is thrust back upon his own inviolability and indestructibility. For a man of the study every form of exile becomes a spur to internal concentration, and for Cicero this misadventure came at the most propitious moment. The great dialectician was approaching the turn of life, and hitherto, amid storms and stresses, he had had little opportunity for creative contemplation. How much conflict, how many contrarieties had this man who was now sixty been forced to endure in the restricted environment of his time? Excelling in tenacity, versatility, and spiritual force, he, a "novus homo," had filled one after another the public posts and honours that were usually beyond the reach of the lowly born, being jealously reserved for itself by the aristocratic clique. He had touched the highest heights of popular approval and been plunged into the deepest depths of popular disapproval. After his defeat of the conspiracy of Catiline he was borne in triumph up the steps of the Capitol, was garlanded by the populace, and was distinguished by the

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

Senate with the coveted title of "pater patriae." On the other hand he was compelled to flee by night, when banished by the same Senate and left in the lurch by the same populace. There was no important office which he could not have held, nor any rank which this indefatigable publicist could not have attained. He had conducted trials in the Forum, had commanded legions in the field, had as consul governed the Republic and as proconsul the provinces. Millions of scsterces had passed through his fingers, and under his hands had melted into debts. He had owned the finest house in the Palatine, and had seen it in ruins, burned, and laid waste by his enemies. He had written memorable treatises and delivered speeches that have become classics. He had engendered children and lost children, had been both bold and weak, both stubborn and servile, much admired and much hated, a man of a weathercock disposition equally notable for his defects and his merits; to sum up, he had been the most attractive and most stimulating personality of his epoch. Yet for one thing, the most important of all, he had had no leisure, never having had time to direct his gaze inwards upon his own life. Made unceasingly restless by ambition, never had he been able quietly to take counsel, tranquilly to sum up his knowledge and his thoughts.

Now at length, when Caesar's *coup d'état* had cut Cicero off from public affairs, was it possible for Cicero to attend fruitfully to those private affairs which are, after all, the most engrossing things in the world; and without repining he left the Forum, the Senate, and the Imperium to the dictatorship of Julius Caesar. Distaste for politics began to master the statesman who had been driven from them. He was resigned to his lot. Let others try to safeguard the rights of a people which was more interested in gladiatorial shows and similar amusements than in liberty; henceforward he would be more con-

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

cerned with seeking, finding, and cultivating his own, his inner freedom. Thus it came to pass that Marcus Tullius Cicero for the first time looked reflectively within, determined to show the world for what he had worked and for what he had lived.

A born artist, one whom chance only had lured from the study into the phantasmagoria of politics, Marcus Tullius Cicero tried to adapt his mode of life to his age and his fundamental inclinations. He withdrew from Rome, the noisy metropolis, to Tusculum (to-day known as Frascati), being there able to enjoy one of the most beautiful landscapes in Italy. The soft-tinted wooded hills flowed gently downwards into the Campagna, and the rivulets made silvery music that could not disturb the prevailing tranquillity of this remote spot. After many years spent in the market-place, the Forum, the campaigner's tent, or the traveller's carriage, he could now at length devote his mind without disturbance and without reserve to creative reflection. The town, seductive and fatiguing, was like a distant haze on the far horizon; and yet it was an easy journey. Friends often came to enjoy lively conversation: Atticus, his closest intimate; young men such as Brutus or Cassius; once, even, a dangerous guest, Julius Caesar, the mighty dictator. Though his friends from Rome might sometimes be tardy of coming, were there not other companions always at hand, most welcome friends who could never disappoint, silent or talkative as one willed—books? Marcus Tullius Cicero prepared for himself a magnificent library in his rural retreat, an inexhaustible honeycomb of wisdom, containing the best works of the sages of Greece and the historians of Rome, together with the compendia of the laws. With such friends from all ages and speaking all languages a man could never be lonely, however long the evenings. Morning was devoted to work. A learned and docile slave was ready

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

to write when the master chose to dictate; meals passed off agreeably in the company of Tullia, the daughter of whom he was so fond; and the lessons he gave his son were a daily source of variety, a perpetual stimulus. Moreover, though a sexagenarian, he thought fit to indulge in the sweetest folly of old age, taking to himself a young wife—younger than his own daughter. The artist in him made him wish to enjoy beauty not only in marble or in verses, but also in its most sensual and most alluring form.

Thus at the age of sixty did Marcus Tullius Cicero seem to have come home at last to himself. He would be nothing but a philosopher, and no more a demagogue; nothing but an author, and never again a rhetorician; lord of his own leisure, and not remain the hard-worked servant of popular favour. Instead of standing in the market-place to round off periods addressed to the ears of corruptible judges, it would be preferable to demonstrate his rhetorical talents graphically to all and sundry by composing *De Oratore* for the benefit of would-be imitators. Simultaneously by inditing his treatise *De Senectute* he would try to convince himself that a genuine sage must regard resignation as the chief glory of declining years. The finest, the most harmonious of his letters date from this same period of internal recollection; and even when disaster overtook him in the death of his beloved Tullia, his art helped him to maintain philosophical dignity; he wrote the *Consolationes* which throughout the centuries have brought equanimity to thousands visited by similar afflictions. It is because of this phase of exile that posterity has been enabled to acclaim him as an exceptionally fine author no less than as a great orator, for during these three quiet years Cicero contributed more to his work and his fame than during the thirty he had ere this squandered upon public life. The exponent of Law had at length learned the bitter secret

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

which everyone engaged in a public career must learn at long last—that a man cannot enduringly defend the freedom of the masses, but only his own freedom, the freedom that comes from within.

Thus as a cosmopolitan, a humanist, and a philosopher, Marcus Tullius Cicero passed in retirement a delightful summer, a creative autumn, and an Italian winter, fully expecting to spend the rest of his life remote from secular or political intrusions. He barely glanced at the daily news reports and letters from Rome, being indifferent to the game which no longer needed him as a player. He seemed to be cured of the man of letters's itch for publicity, to have become a citizen of the invisible republic, not now a citizen of that corrupted and violated republic which had without resistance succumbed to the reign of terror. Then, one noontide on a March day of the year 44 B.C., a panting messenger, travel-soiled with dust, burst into the house. Hardly had he succeeded in gasping out his news that Julius Caesar, the dictator, had been assassinated in the Forum, when he fell exhausted on the floor.

Cicero started up in alarm. Not many weeks ago the magnanimous conqueror had sat at this very table, and even though he, Cicero, had been moved almost to hatred by his opposition to the dangerous man of might, whose military triumphs he had contemplated with suspicion, he had never been able to overcome his secret admiration for the masterly mind, the organizing genius, and the kindness of the only respectable one among his enemies. Yet despite a detestation for the crude argument of the assassin's dagger, had not Caesar, however great his merits and however remarkable his achievements, himself committed the most atrocious of murders, *parricidium patriae*, a son's butchery of his fatherland? Was it not because he was a man of outstanding genius

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

that Julius Caesar had become so dangerous to Roman freedom? His death was deplorable, of course; and yet the misdeed might promote the victory of a sacred cause. Might not the Republic be resurrected now that Caesar was dead? Could not the dictator's death lead to the triumph of the sublimest of ideals—the ideal of liberty?

Cicero, therefore, soon recovered from his panic. He had never wanted so heinous a deed, perhaps not even wished for it in a dream. Brutus and Cassius (though Brutus, while plucking the bloody dagger from Caesar's breast, had shouted the name of Cicero, and thus invoked the leader of republicanism to bear witness to the deed) had never asked him to join the ranks of the conspirators. But at any rate, since what had been done could not be undone, it must, if possible, be turned to the advantage of the Republic. Cicero knew that the path towards the re-establishment of the ancient Roman freedom led across this royal corpse, and it behoved him to show the path to others. Such a chance was unique, and must not be wasted. That very day Marcus Tullius Cicero forsook his library, his writings, and the artist's hallowed leisure. With feverish haste he made for Rome, to defend the rights of the Republic as the true heir of Caesar, to defend it simultaneously against Caesar's murderers and those who would try to avenge the murder.

Cicero found Rome a confused, appalled, and perplexed city. In the first hour, Caesar's assassination had proved greater than the assassins. The haphazard congeries of plotters had known only how to murder, to sweep away, this man who stood head and shoulders above them all. Now, when the moment had come to turn their crime to account, they were hopelessly at a loss, not knowing what to do. The senators vacillated whether to condone or to condemn; while the populace, long used to leading-strings, missed the firm hand and

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

ventured no opinion. Mark Antony and the other friends of Caesar were afraid of the conspirators and trembled for their own lives. The conspirators, in their turn, dreaded the vengeance of those who had loved Caesar.

Amid this general consternation Cicero was the only man who showed firmness of will. Though, like other persons that are predominantly intellectual and nervous, he was usually hesitant and anxious, he now firmly took his stand in support of the deed which he had done nothing to promote. Upright upon the flagstones which were still damp with the blood of the murdered dictator, in face of the assembled Senate he welcomed the removal of Caesar as a victory for the republican ideal. "O my people," he exclaimed, "you have found freedom once more. Brutus and Cassius have done the greatest of deeds, not on behalf of Rome alone, but on behalf of the whole world." Yet at the same time he demanded that what was in itself a murderous action should immediately be given its higher meaning. Power was dissipated now that Caesar lay dead. They must instantly proceed to save the Republic, to re-establish the old Roman constitution. Mark Antony must be deprived of the consulship, and executive authority must be conferred on Brutus and Cassius. For the first time in his life this devotee of Law urged that during an hour or two the letter of the Law should be broken, to enforce the prevalence of freedom without cease.

For Marcus Tullius Cicero the appointed hour for which he had so ardently longed ever since the overthrow of Catiline, had at length come with the ides of March in which Caesar had been struck down, and had he but used his chance we should all have been taught a different Roman history at school. In that case Cicero's name would have come down to us in Livy's *Rome* and in Plutarch's *Lives*, not only as that of a celebrated author, but also as that of the saviour of the Republic,

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

as that of the genius of Roman liberty. His would have been the imperishable glory of having held the powers of a dictator and having voluntarily restored them to the people. But again and again in history is repeated the tragedy that the man of the study, because burdened by an excessive sense of responsibility, so rarely shows himself a decisive man of action. Repeatedly we encounter the same cleavage in intellectual and creative persons. Because they see better than others the follies of the time, they are eager to intervene, and in an hour of enthusiasm will impetuously fling themselves into the political arena. But simultaneously they shrink from meeting violence with violence. Their inward sense of responsibility makes them hesitate to instil terror, to shed blood; and their hesitancy and caution at the precise moment when precipitancy and recklessness have become not merely desirable but essential, paralyses their energies. After his first impulse, Cicero began to realize the situation with alarming clearness. Looking at the conspirators whom the day before he had extolled as heroes, he saw that they were but weak creatures on the point of running away from the shadow of their own deed. He looked at the common people and perceived that they were far, now, from being the old *populus Romanus*, the heroes of whom he had dreamed; that they were only a degenerate plebs, which thought of nothing but profit and pleasure, bread and circuses. One day they would adulate Brutus and Cassius, the murderers of Caesar; the next they would applaud Antony, when he summoned them to take vengeance; and the third they would extol Dolabella for having the statues of Caesar destroyed. In this depraved city, he became aware, not a soul was full of unqualified devotion to the ideal of liberty. Vainly had Caesar's blood been shed, futile had been the murder, for all were rivalling one another, were intriguing and quarrelling in the hope of the largest legacy, the greatest

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

amount of the dead man's wealth, the control of his legions, the wielding of his power. They wanted not to promote the one cause that was sacred, the cause of Rome; each sought his own advantage and his own gain.

More and more weary, more and more sceptical became Cicero in the fortnight that followed his premature enthusiasm. He alone was concerned about the re-establishment of the Republic; the national sentiment was extinct, the craving for liberty annulled. At length he was sickened by the unmeaning tumult. No longer could he deceive himself. He saw that his words were powerless, admitted that his conciliatory role could not be sustained, that he must lack either the strength or the courage he would have needed to save his homeland from the imminent civil war. He therefore resolved to leave it to its fate. In the beginning of April he quitted Rome and, again disillusioned, again vanquished, returned to his beloved books, seeking his lonely villa at Puteoli in the Bay of Naples.

For the second time Marcus Tullius Cicero had fled from the busy world into solitude. Now at length he was aware that, as man of learning, as humanist, and as guardian of the Law, he had from the first been mistaken to enter a sphere in which might was looked upon as right and where unscrupulousness was more in demand than wisdom. Having been unable to perform the redemptive deed in the hostile domain of reality, he would at least do his utmost to preserve his dream for the wiser world of posterity. The labour and experience of his fifty years should not be wholly void of effect. In all humility, therefore, he reminded himself of his best energies, and in these days of hermitage he composed as a legacy to future generations his last and greatest book, *De Officiis*, which expounds the duties the independent, the moral man has to perform in relation to himself and

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

the State. This was his political and ethical testament, indited during the autumn of the year 44 B.C., which was also the autumn of his life.

The exordium of this treatise upon the relations between the individual and the State shows that these last words of a man who had retired from and renounced public life and its passions were really intended to be a testament. It was addressed to his son, to whom he frankly admitted that not through indifference had he withdrawn from the political arena, but because he considered it unbecoming, as a free spirit and a Roman republican, to serve a dictatorship. "While the State was still ruled by men whom the State itself had chosen, I gladly devoted my body and my mind to the *res publica*. But as soon as everything passed under isolated sway, there was no place left for public service or public authority." Since the Senate had been dismissed and the law courts closed, how could he, while still retaining a shadow of self-respect, continue to seek anything in the Senate or the Forum? Hitherto public and political activities had wasted too much of his time. "Scribendi otium non erat"; never had he been able to commit his philosophical views to paper in a succinct form. But now, when activity had been forced upon him, he would at least take advantage of it in the sense of Scipio's fine utterance, for Scipio had said: "Never have I been busier than when I had nothing to do, and never have I been less lonely than when entirely alone."

In many respects the ideas concerning the relations between the individual and the State which Marcus Tullius Cicero thus transmitted to his son as a legacy, were by no means original. They combined those he had read with those he had acquired in other ways. Even after sixty years a dialectician does not suddenly become an originator, nor a compiler become a creator. But Cicero's views were given a fresh impetus by the asso-

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

ciated effects of sadness and embitterment. Amid fierce civil wars, and at a time when praetorian hordes and partisan bandits were struggling for mastery, a man with a truly humane spirit was dreaming oncc again (as the noblest of those alive at such an epoch have always dreamed) the everlasting dream of ensuring the peace of the world by moral enlightenment and by conciliation. Justice and law—these alone must be the pillars of the State. Those who were sincere through and through, and not the demagogues, must hold power and thus rule the State rightly. No one must try to impress his personal will, and therewith his arbitrary notions, upon the people, and we should refuse to obey any such ambitious wretches who have snatched leadership, should refuse to be guided by "hoc omne genus pestiferum acque impium"; and Cicero, as a man of inviolable independence, fiercely rejects all thought of anything in common with a dictator and the remotest idea of serving him. "Nulla est enim societas nobis cum tyrannis et potius summa distractio est." For, he argues, the forcible rule of an individual necessarily and violently infringes the common rights of man. True harmony can only arise in a community when the individual subordinates his private interests to those of the community instead of seeking to derive personal advantage from a public position. Like all humanists an advocate of the golden mean, Cicero demands the rounding off of oppositions. On the one hand Rome needs no Sullas and no Caesars, and on the other no Gracchi; dictatorship is dangerous, but equally dangerous is revolution.

Much that Cicero writes was written before him by Plato in *The Republic*, and was voiced after him much later by Jean Jacques Rousseau and other idealistic utopians. But what makes his testament so strikingly in advance of his day is that here, half a century before Christianity began, we find the utterance of a sublime

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

idea, the idea of humanity. At a time of brutal cruelty, when even Caesar after the conquest of a town would have the hands of two thousand prisoners hacked off, when martyrdoms and gladiatorial combats, crucifixions and massacres, were daily occurrences and were taken as matters of course, Cicero was the first among Romans to utter an eloquent protest against the misuse of authority. He condemned war as bestial, denounced the militarism and imperialism of his own people, pilloried the exploitation of foreign provinces, and declared that territories should be incorporated into the Roman realm exclusively by civilization and morality, never by the might of the sword. With prophetic gaze he foresaw that the destruction of Rome would result from vengeance taken upon her for her bloody victories, for her conquests which were immoral because achieved only by force. Always when a nation deprives other nations of freedom, through the secret working of revenge it forfeits its own liberty. Just when the Roman legions (armed mercenaries) were marching into Parthia and Persia, into Germany and Britain, into Spain and Macedonia, pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of empire, this powerless champion of humanity adjured his son to venerate the co-operation of mankind as the sublimest of ideals. Thus, crowning his career with triumph just before its end, did Marcus Tullius Cicero, hitherto nothing more than a cultivated humanist, become the first champion of humanity at large, and thereby the first spokesman of genuine spiritual culture.

While Cicero, apart from the world, was tranquilly meditating upon the substance and the form of a moral constitution for the State, unrest was growing in the Roman realm. Neither the Senate nor the populace had yet decided whether the murderers of Caesar ought to be praised or outlawed. Mark Antony was arming for war against Brutus and Cassius, and unexpectedly a

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

third pretender had appeared upon the scene—Octavianus, whom Caesar had designated as heir, and who now wished to enter into his heritage. Scarcely had he landed in Italy than he wrote asking Cicero for support; but simultaneously Antony invited the old man to Rome, while Brutus and Cassius appealed to him from their camps. All were equally desirous that this great statesman should espouse their cause, and each hoped that the famous lawyer would prove their wrong to be right. By a sound instinct politicians who crave for power they still lack always seek the support of intellectuals, whom they will contemptuously thrust aside as soon as their end has been gained. Had Cicero been no more than the vain and ambitious man of earlier days, he would easily have been led astray.

But Cicero had grown both weary and wise, two moods between which there is apt to be a dangerous resemblance. He knew that only one thing was now essential; to finish his book, to make order in his life and his thoughts. Like Odysseus, who closed his men's ears with wax lest they should be beguiled by the Siren's song, he shut his inner ears to the allurements of those who held or sought power. Ignoring the call of Mark Antony, the appeal of Brutus, and even the demands of the Senate, he went on writing his book, feeling himself stronger in words than in deeds, wiser in solitude than he could be in a crowd, and foreboding that *De Officiis* would be his farewell to the world.

Not until he had finished his testament did he look around. It was an unpleasant awakening. The country, his homeland, was menaced by civil war. Antony, having plundered Caesar's strongbox and the treasuries of the temple, was able with this stolen wealth to engage mercenaries, while opposed to him were three well-equipped armies: that of Octavianus, that of Lepidus, and that of Brutus and Cassius. The time for concilia-

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

tion or intermediation had passed. The matter which awaited decision was whether Rome should succumb to a new Caesarism, that of Antonius, or whether the Republic should continue. At such an hour everyone had to choose. Even Marcus Tullius Cicero had to choose, cautious and reflective though he had ever been—one who preferred compromise, who stood above the parties or vacillated between them.

At this juncture a strange thing happened. When Cicero had handed his testament, *De Officiis*, to his son, he seemed, like one who had grown careless of life, inspired with new courage. He knew that his career, whether political or literary, was ended. He had said all he wanted to say, and had little scope for further experience. He was old, had done his work; why, then, should he trouble to defend the poor vestiges of life? Even as an animal hunted to exhaustion, and aware that the clamorous hounds are near, turns at bay to meet the end sooner, so did Cicero, scorning death, fling himself once more into the struggle where it was fiercest. He who for months and years had wielded only the dumb stylus, had recourse once more to the thunderbolt of speech and hurled it against the enemies of the Republic.

Shattering was the spectacle. In December the grey-haired man stood once more in the Forum and appealed to the Romans to show themselves worthy of their ancestors. Fourteen "Philippics" did he volley against Antony the usurper, who had refused to obey Senate and people—though Cicero could not but realize how dangerous it was for an unarmed man to attack a dictator who had already marshalled his legions till they were ready to take foot and to slay at his nod. One who expects courage from others can only hope to move them by setting a courageous example. Cicero knew well enough that not now, as of old in this same Forum, was

he fighting with words alone, but must hazard his life in defence of his convictions. Resolutely he declared from the rostrum: "Already in youth I defended the Republic, nor will I forsake it now that I am old. I will gladly give my life can I thereby restore freedom to this city. My one wish is that in dying I shall give back liberty to the Roman people. What greater favour than this could the immortal gods bestow on me?" No time was left, he said in plain terms, for bargaining with Antony. It was indispensable to support Octavianus, who, though closely related to Caesar and Caesar's heir, represented the cause of the Republic. No longer was it a case of this man or that, but of a most holy purpose—*res in extremum est adducta discrimen: de libertate decernitur*. The affair had become vital, liberty was at stake. When this sacred thing was in danger, to hesitate would be utterly depraved. Cicero, the pacifist, therefore insisted that the armies of the Republic must take the field against the armies of the dictatorship. He who, like his pupil of fifteen hundred years later, Erasmus, detested *tumultus*, hated civil war, more than almost anything in the world, said that a state of siege must be declared, the usurper be put under the ban.

Being no longer a lawyer engaged to speak on behalf of questionable causes, but the advocate of a sublime ideal, Cicero found impressive and glowing words. "Let other peoples live as slaves," he exclaimed to his fellow-citizens. "We Romans refuse. If we cannot win freedom, let us die." If the State had indeed arrived at that pitch of turpitude, then it would beseem a people which ruled the whole world ("nos principes orbis terrarum gentiumque omnium") to conduct itself as did the slaves who had become gladiators in the arena and thought it better to die boldly with their faces to the foe than basely submit to being cut down for cowardice. "Ut cum dignitate potius cadamus quam cum ignominia

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

serviamus"—rather die with honour than serve in disgrace.

The Senate and the assembled populace listened to these Philippics with astonishment. Many, perhaps, foresaw that this was the last time for centuries when such words could be uttered in the market-place. Soon in this public spot people would only bow silently before the marble statues of the emperors, for instead of the free speech of old all that would be tolerated in the realm of the Caesars would be the whispering of flatterers and place-hunters. The audience shuddered, with mingled fear and admiration of this old man who, with the courage of despair, continued to defend the independence of the disintegrated Republic. But even the fire-brand of his eloquence failed to kindle the rotting stem of Roman pride. While the lonely idealist was in the Forum advocating self-sacrifice, the unscrupulous masters of the legions were already entering into the most atrocious pact in Roman history.

The very Octavianus whom Cicero was extolling as defender of the Republic, and the very Lepidus on whose behalf he had advocated the erection of a statue to commemorate services to the Roman people—the two men whom he had summoned to crush Antony the usurper—preferred, both of them, to come to terms privately with this usurper. Since not one of the three leaders of the armies, neither Octavianus nor Antony nor Lepidus, felt himself strong enough unaided to make a mouthful of the Roman Republic, the enemies came to an understanding for a secret division of the heritage of Julius Caesar. Within a day, instead of one great Caesar, Rome had now three little Caesars.

It was a momentous turn in universal history when the three generals, instead of obeying the Senate and respecting the laws of Rome, united to form a triumvirate

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

and to divide, as easily won spoils of war, a mighty empire which extended over a considerable part of three continents. On an eyot near Bologna, at the confluence of the Reno and the Levino, a tent was erected for the meeting of the three bandits. It need hardly be said that not one of the martial heroes was disposed to trust the two others. Too often in their respective proclamations had they styled one another villain, liar, usurper, enemy of the State, and robber, to blink their prospective allies' depravity. But those who crave for power value it before praiseworthy sentiments, think only of loot and not of honour. Not until the self-appointed leaders of the world, the three would-be partners, had taken every precaution would they come within striking distance of each other. They had to submit to a preliminary search for concealed weapons. When convinced that all was well in this respect, they met with a friendly smile and entered the tent where they were to incubate their plans.

For three days Antony, Octavianus, and Lepidus were in this tent without witnesses. There were three main points to discuss. As regards the first, the partition of the empire, it did not take long to come to a decision. They agreed that Octavianus was to occupy the African provinces, including Numidia; Antony was to have Gaul; and to Lepidus was allotted Spain. Nor was there much trouble about the second point: how they were to get the money needed for their soldiers and their civilian partisans, whose pay was months in arrear. The problem was speedily solved in accordance with a well-tryed system; they would steal the possessions of the wealthiest Romans, whose prompt execution would save a great deal of trouble. Comfortably seated round a table the triumvirs drew up a proscription list of two thousand of the richest men in Italy, among whom were a hundred senators. Each contributed the names of those whom he knew to be well-to-do, not forgetting his personal foes

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

and adversaries. With a few strokes of the stylus they had settled both the economic and the territorial question.

Now came the third problem. One who wishes to found a dictatorship must above all, in order to safeguard his rule, silence the perpetual opponents of tyranny—the independents (too few in number), the permanent advocates of that incxterminable utopia, spiritual freedom. Antony proposed to head this list by the name of Marcus Tullius Cicero. Cicero was more dangerous than any others of his stamp, for he had mental energy and a yearning for independence. Mark him down, then, for death.

Octavianus was horrified, and refused. Being still young (he was but twenty), not yet hardened and envenomed by political perfidy, he shrank from beginning his rule by the slaughter of the most distinguished man of letters in Italy. Cicero had been his loyal advocate, had praised him before the people and the Senate; it was but a few months since Octavianus had sought Cicero's help, had begged Cicero's advice, had reverently appealed to the old man as his "veritable father." Shamed by Antony's proposal, Octavianus stubbornly resisted. Moved by a sound instinct, which was most creditable, he was strongly averse to the notion that this outstanding master of the Latin tongue should be struck down by the dagger of a hired assassin. Antony, however, insisted, knowing full well that spirit and force are irreconcilable enemies, and that no one can be more dangerous to a dictatorship than a man pre-eminent in the use of language. The fight for Cicero's head went on for three days. But in the end Octavianus yielded, with the result that Cicero's name concluded what is perhaps the most abominable document in Roman history. This last addition to the list of the proscribed sealed the death-warrant of the Republic.

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

From the moment when Cicero learned that the three who had hitherto been strongly opposed to one another had been reconciled, he knew that he was lost. He knew Antony to be a man of violence, and that he himself had in his Philippics too vividly described Antony's greed and hatred, unscrupulousness and vanity, insatiable cruelty, to expect from this member of the triumvirate any touch of Julius Caesar's magnanimity. If he wished to save his life, instant flight was his sole resource. He must escape to Greece; must seek in Brutus, Cassius, and Cato the last camp of those who were ready to fight for Republican freedom. It would seem that twice or thrice he meditated trying this refuge, where he would at least be safe from the murderers who were already on the hunt. He made his preparations, informed his friends, embarked, and set out. Once more, however, he vacillated at the last moment. Familiar with the desolation of exile, he was overmastered by the love of his homeland, and felt it would be undignified to spend the rest of his life on the run. A mysterious impulse transcending reason, opposing reason, forced the old man to confront the fate that awaited him. Rendered weary by all that had befallen, he craved, at least, for a few days' rest. He would quietly reflect a little longer, write a few letters, read a few books; after that, let happen what would. During these last months Cicero concealed himself, now at one country seat, now at another, making a remove as soon as danger threatened, but never getting quite out of range. As a man laid up with fever continually rearranges his pillows, so did Cicero again and again transfer from one partial hiding-place to another, neither fully determined to meet his murderers nor fully determined to evade them. It was almost as if he were being guided, in his passive readiness for the end, by what he had himself written in *De Senectute*, that an old man should neither seek death nor try to put it off—for death

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

must be received indifferently whenever it might choose to come. *Neque turpis mors forti viro potest accedere*: for the man strong of soul there can be no shameful death.

In this spirit, when winter began, Cicero, who had already gone to Sicily, commanded his servitors to take boat with him to Italy. He had a small estate at Caieta (known to-day as Gaeta). There he might lie hid for a while; there he would land. The truth was that fatigue—not merely fatigue of the muscles or the nerves, but weariness of life, nostalgia for the end and for the grave—had overpowered him. Still, he would rest a little longer. Once more he would breathe the fragrant air of his native land, once more bid farewell to the world. He would enjoy repose, were it only for a day or an hour.

Immediately after landing, he reverently greeted the lares of the house. He was desperately tired, this man of sixty-four, and the voyage had exhausted him, so he lay down on the cubiculum, relaxed his limbs, and closed his eyes. In gentle slumber he would have a foretaste of the eternal rest that was at hand.

But hardly had he sought repose than he was roused by a faithful slave who rushed into the room. Suspicious characters were close at hand, armed men, and a member of the household (one to whom Cicero had shown many kindnesses) had, for a reward, betrayed the whereabouts of the master. Let his lordship flee instantly; a litter was ready; the slaves would arm themselves for his protection; it was but a short stretch to the ship, and there he would be safe. The tired old man refused to move. "What matter?" he said. "I am weary of running away and weary of life. Let me perish in the country I have vainly tried to save." At length, however, his loyal retainers were able to persuade him; armed slaves carried the litter through a little wood by a devious path that would lead them to the barque.

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

But the traitor did not wish to forfeit the promised blood-money. Hastily he summoned a centurion and some legionaries. Pursuing Cicero through the wood, they overtook their quarry.

The armed porters, surrounding the litter, made ready to fight, but the master commanded them to desist. His own life must anyhow be nearing its end. Why should others, younger men, be sacrificed? In this last hour, the man who had frequently been hesitant, unsteady, and seldom courageous, proved resolute and fearless. As a true Roman he felt that he as a world's teacher of philosophy must meet this last test by dying unafrighted—*sapientissimus quisque aequissimo animo moritur*. At his order, the slaves stood aside. Unarmed and without resistance, Cicero presented his grey head to the murderers, saying, with dignity: "I have always known myself to be mortal"—"non ignoravi me mortalem genuisse." The assassins, however, did not want philosophy; they wanted the promised guerdon. There was no delay. With a mighty blow the centurion ended the life of the unarmed man.

Thus perished Marcus Tullius Cicero, the last champion of Roman freedom, more heroic, more manly, and more stalwart in this final hour than he had been in the thousands upon thousands of hours he had lived before.

The tragedy was followed by a bloody satire. The urgency with which Antony had demanded this particular murder led the murderers to suppose that Cicero's head would command an especially good price. They could not, of course, foresee how signal a value would be ascribed to the man's brain by the intellectuals of their own day and of posterity, but it was well within their competence to understand the sum that would be paid by the triumvir who had been so eager to get this enemy out of the way. Lest there should be any question

THE HEAD UPON THE ROSTRUM

whether they had done their work, they determined to bring to Antony incontrovertible proof. Without a qualm the leader of the band hacked off the dead man's head and hands, thrust them into a sack, shouldered it though still dripping blood, and made hotfoot for Rome to delight the dictator with the news that the famous champion of the Roman Republic had been slain in the customary manner.

The lesser bandit, the chief of the assassins, had not miscalculated. The greater bandit, who had ordered the crime, showed his joy by princely generosity. Mark Antony could afford to be liberal now that the two thousand wealthiest men in Italy had been slaughtered and despoiled. He paid the centurion no less than a million sesterces for the blood-stained sack that held the head and hands of him who had been Marcus Tullius Cicero. But therewith his lust for vengeance was not yet satisfied. The crude hate of the man of blood for the man superior in moral rank enabled him to devise a horrible disgrace—unwitting that the shame for this would accrue to himself till the end of time. He ordered that the victim's head and hands should be nailed to the rostrum from which Cicero had so eloquently appealed to the people to rally against Antony and in defence of Roman freedom.

The populace attended the spectacle next day. In midst of the Forum, on the rostrum, was displayed the head of the last champion of liberty. A huge rusty nail pierced the forehead which had thought thousands of great thoughts; pallid and shrunken, closed were the lips that had voiced more sweetly than any others the resonant words of the Latin language; closed were the eyelids to hide the eyes which for sixty years had watched over the Republic; powerless were the hands that had written the most beautiful epistles of the time. But none of the accusations which the famous orator had voiced

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

from this tribune against brutality, against the fury of despotism, against lawlessness, could denounce so convincingly the eternal wrongfulness of force as did now the silent, severed head of the murdered. The terrific spectacle of his cruel martyrdom had more eloquent power over the intimidated masses than the most famous speeches he had ever thundered from this desecrated Forum. What was meant to be a shameful humiliation became his last and greatest victory.

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM



DANGER LOOMS

ON February 5, 1451, secret tidings were brought in Asia Minor to Mahmud, then twenty-one years of age, and eldest son of Sultan Murad. His father was dead. Without a word to his advisers or to any of the ministers of State, the young prince, who was shrewd as well as energetic, promptly sent for his best horse. Without drawing rein, he spurred the thoroughbred along the hundred and twenty miles which separated him from the Bosphorus, and crossed the Dardanelles to Gallipoli. There, to the most trustworthy of his suite, he announced the news of Murad's death. To be ready for coping with other aspirants to the throne, he got together some picked troops and led them to Adrianople, where, unopposed, he was recognized as monarch of the Ottoman Empire. His first actions after coming to the throne were enough to show his ruthlessness and determination. The most formidable of possible rivals was his brother, a minor. Mahmud had this youth drowned in a bath; and then, with equal cunning and savagery, hastened to put the hired assassin to death.

Byzantium was horrified to learn that the cautious Murad had been succeeded, as ruler of the Turks, by the impetuous and ambitious Mahmud. Thanks to the activity of a hundred spies, the Emperor was fully informed as to the situation. He knew that Mahmud, eager for fame, had sworn to conquer the capital of the Eastern Empire; and that, young though the new Sultan

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

was, he had for years devoted most of his days and nights to concerting plans for the fulfilment of these hopes. At the same time the reports as to the unrivalled military and diplomatic capacity of the new Padishah were unanimous. Mahmud was both pious and brutal; passionate and crafty; a lover of literature and the arts, able to read the story of Caesar's campaigns and the lives of noted Romans in the Latin original, but also a barbarian to whom bloodshed came as easily as the spilling of water. This man with fine, melancholy eyes and a cruel nose shaped like the beak of a parrot, was an indefatigable worker, a bold soldier, and an unscrupulous trickster; while these dangerous energies were concentrated upon one idea, upon a single aim. His great-grandfather Bajazet and his father Murad had been the first to show Europe the invincibility of Turkish arms. Well, he would splendidly outdo them; and, felt the unhappy Byzantines, his first step would be to seize Byzantium, the only remaining glorious jewel in the imperial crown of Constantine and Justinian.

To a man with a resolute grip, this jewel might certainly appear undefended, and ripe for the grasping. The Byzantine Empire, of old the Eastern Empire of Rome, which had once spanned the world from Persia to the Alps on one side and to the deserts of Central Asia on the other, and had needed months to cross, could now be traversed on foot in three hours. Little was left of its vast possessions. It was a head without a body, a capital without a country. The "Empire" was but Constantinople, the town of Byzantium. Even of this town there was left in possession of the Emperor, the Basileus, no more than a fragment, the modern Stamboul. Galata belonged to the Genoese, and all the land outside the walls was in the hands of the Turks. The "Empire" of the last of the Emperors was a pitiful place; an encircling wall of colossal size, and the churches,

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

palaces, dwellings that lay within. That was Byzantium. Pillaged by the Crusaders, depopulated by the Black Death, exhausted by having unceasingly to defend itself against nomadic raiders, torn in sunder by nationalist and religious disputes, this city could produce neither men nor manly courage to resist the Ottoman invader, whose tentacles had long ago surrounded it. The purple of Constantine Dragases, last Emperor of Byzantium, was a mantle of wind; his crown was the sport of destiny. But for the very reason that Byzantium was invested by the Turks and was hallowed in Western eyes by having been for more than a thousand years the centre of a civilization she shared with Europe—to Europe, this city on the Golden Horn had become a symbol of European honour. Only if united Christendom were to protect its last and decaying Eastern bulwark, could Hagia Sophia, the finest cathedral of the Eastern Church, persist as a basilica of the Faith.

Constantine was quick to recognize the danger. Manifesting alarm notwithstanding Mahmud's pacific assurances, he sent a stream of envoys to Italy. Some went to the Pope, some to Venice, and some to Genoa. One and all they begged for galleys and soldiers. But Rome hesitated, and so did Venice. Between the Eastern Christians and the Western a theological gulf yawned. The Greek Church detested the Roman, and its Patriarch refused to acknowledge the spiritual supremacy of the Pope. It was true that long ere this, when the Turkish menace had already grown strong, at councils in Ferrara and Florence the reunion of Christendom had been decided, and in return for Byzantium's concessions she had been promised help. But as soon as the danger became less imminent the Greek Synods refused to abide by their word. The stubbornness of the Orthodox did not yield until Mahmud's accession to the throne; but thereupon, sending frantic appeals for help, the Eastern

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

Church announced its submission to Rome. Galleys were equipped with soldiers and munitions. The relieving fleet was preceded by a sailing-ship on which travelled the Papal Legate to effect the formal reconciliation of the two great Churches, and to make it plain to the world that whoever attacked Byzantium would challenge the united forces of Christendom.

THE MASS OF RECONCILIATION

A great spectacle was to be seen on these December days. The wonderful basilica (whose then glories of marble and mosaic and glittering jewels can hardly be suspected by a visitor to what is now a Mohammedan mosque in which the mosaics have been whitewashed) was the seat of the Festival of Reconciliation. Constantine, the Basileus, arrived, attended by his dignitaries. In his imperial person he was to be supreme witness and guarantor of perpetual harmony. The gigantic fane was packed to repletion, and was lit by innumerable candles. Before the altar, saying Mass in fraternal amity, stood Isidorus the Papal Legate and Gregorius the Orthodox Patriarch. For the first time since the renewal of the Eastern Schism prayers for His Holiness the Pope were uttered in Hagia Sophia; for the first time psalms in Latin and in Greek resounded simultaneously from the arches of the imperishable cathedral; while the corpse of St. Spiridon was borne in procession by trains of the respective clergy. East and West, the Orthodox creed and the Roman, seemed to have come together in lasting unity. After years upon years of insensate quarrels, it was as if the Idea of Europe, the Significance of the Occident, had been fulfilled.

Short and fugitive, however, are the moments in history when reason and the spirit of conciliation prevail. While voices were still being piously raised in joint

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

prayer, in his cell hard by the learned monk Genadios was fulminating against the Latins and the betrayal of the True Church. Hardly had the bonds of peace been plaited by reason, when they were severed by fanaticism. Just as little as the Greek clergy were inclined for surrender were the friends in the western Mediterranean disposed to send the promised help. A few galleys, a few hundred soldiers, were indeed dispatched, but then the city of Byzantium was left to its fate.

THE CAMPAIGN OPENS

When those who rule by force are preparing to make war on a neighbour, they are wont, while their equipment is still unfinished, to talk much of their pacific intentions. That was why Mahmud, on ascending the throne, was especially cordial and tranquillizing in his welcome of the Emperor Constantine's ambassador. By Allah and the Prophet, by the angels and the Koran, he swore that it was his inviolable determination to keep the treaties between the Turks and the Basileus. Meanwhile he exchanged secret pledges of neutrality with the Hungarians and the Serbs. This neutrality was to last for three years—the time he thought that he might need to effect the conquest of Byzantium. As soon as it suited him, he took steps that would make war inevitable.

Hitherto the Turks had occupied only the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, and the Emperor's ships had passed unhindered through the narrow strait to load at the granaries of the Black Sea. Now Mahmud blocked this outlet by building a fortress at Roumili Hissar, on the European coast, though here he had not a shadow of right to establish himself. This was where the channel was narrowest, and where Xerxes had crossed in order to invade Greece. In one night ten thousand workmen were ferried over. The building of the fort was against

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

the plain wording of the treaties, but when have men of violence ever bothered about scraps of paper? The Turks provided themselves with food by plundering the fields. To get stones for their building operations they pulled down the houses and the famous Church of St. Michael as well. The Sultan directed the work in person, and the Byzantines had to look on helplessly while their access to the Black Sea was being cut off. Though there had been no declaration of war, the first ships that tried to run the gauntlet were fired on from the new fort; and, after this successful demonstration, no further proof of the Sultan's intentions was needed. In August, 1452, Mahmud, having summoned his aghas and pashas, openly announced his determination to seize Byzantium. As a further sign of his intentions, he sent messengers throughout his dominions to call the valid men to arms, and on April 5, 1453, the forces of a huge Ottoman army encamped beneath the walls of the doomed city.

The Sultan rode at the head of his troops, sumptuously dressed, and prepared to pitch his tent outside the Lycas Gate. But before hoisting the standard in front of his headquarters he gave orders that his praying-carpet should be unrolled. Having stepped on to it barefoot, he turned towards Mecca and thrice prostrated himself, touching the ground with his forehead, while, behind, his men, by thousands and tens of thousands, completed the same motions in time with those of their master, voicing the same words—a prayer to Allah for strength and victory. Now Mahmud rose. The devotee had become a man of action, God's servant was also God's soldier. Through the camp speeded his *tellals*, his public criers, to blow their trumpets and proclaim far and wide: "The siege has begun."

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

THE WALLS AND THE ARTILLERY

Only one strength was left to Byzantium—her walls. Nothing but this heritage from a greater and happier time remained of what had, in the past, been a world-wide dominion. The triangle of the town was protected by a threefold cuirass. Low, but still powerful, were the stone ramparts on the flanks of the city towards the Golden Horn on one side and the Sea of Marmora on the other; while the defences on the landward exposure, known as the Wall of Theodosius, were far mightier. Constantine, when he made Byzantium his seat of government, foreseeing that the place might be assailed, surrounded his new capital with blocks of hewn stone, and Justinian added to the walls, strengthening them; but the true bulwark of resistance was furnished by the Wall of Theodosius, five miles in length, constructed of masses of ashlar. The ivy-clad remnants of freestone are still there to testify to the former greatness of the work. Crenellated and loopholed, furnished with moats and drains, guarded by huge square towers in double and triple rows, added to and repaired by one emperor after another for a thousand years, this majestic fortification was regarded as the symbol of impregnability. Of old it had defied the impetuous onslaughts of barbarian hordes and the fierce raids of Turkish warriors; so now would it laugh at any siege instruments yet discovered. It was proof against battering-rams; even the missiles of the recently invented culverins and mortars could work no mischief; not a town in fifteenth-century Europe was more strongly defended than Constantinople by the Wall of Theodosius.

No one could be better acquainted than was Mahmud with this wall, and he never doubted its strength. For months and years, in night-watches and in dreams, he

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

had been mainly occupied with schemes for successfully assailing the unassailable, for violating the inviolable. His table was piled with sketches showing the size of the enemy fortifications, and indicating spots where they might conceivably be breached. He knew every elevation and every depression before and behind them; was familiar with all the conduits which traversed them; and had discussed the minutest details with his military engineers. Invariably he had been disappointed by these authorities, who without exception assured him that in default of new weapons of attack there was no chance of battering down the Wall of Theodosius.

Well, then, he must make stronger artillery: longer cannon with a longer range, propelling shot made of harder stone than any used before, weightier missiles which would prove unprecedentedly destructive. There was no other resource. New siege guns were what he needed for the overthrow of these hitherto indestructible walls, and he was resolved to get them at any cost.

At any cost—such a specification will always evoke vigorously creative energies. Thus it came to pass that very soon after the declaration of war there arrived to demand audience of the Sultan a Hungarian named Urbas or Orbas, who had the reputation of being the most ingenious and most experienced cannon-founder in the world. True, he was a Christian, and had recently offered his services to the Emperor Constantine; but rightly anticipating that Sultan Mahmud would give him better opportunities for the exercise of his talents and would make a higher bid, he declared himself ready, if unlimited materials were placed at his disposal, to provide the Mohammedan ruler with cannon much more formidable than any yet seen on earth. The Sultan, like every other man with a fixed idea, knew no restrictions as to price. Urbas could have as many workmen as he wanted; ore was brought to Adrianople in a

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

thousand wains; and for three months, using secret processes, the cannon-founder was engaged in preparing and hardening his clay moulds. The glowing metal was run into the first of these. The casting was flawless. The mould was chipped away from the enormous tube, which was left for a while to cool. Then, before making a trial shot, Mahmud sent criers through the town warning women with child. Now, with flashes of lightning from the mouth of the gun and a roar like thunder, the massive ball of stone was discharged, and instantly demolished the wall at which it was fired. Thereupon Mahmud ordered that a whole park of artillery should be made, with guns of the same vast proportions.

The first great "stone-throwing machine," as the terrified Greek chroniclers named the new wonder, had been successfully cast. But an even more difficult problem had now to be faced. How was this monster, this bronze dragon, to be conveyed across Thrace to the walls of Constantinople? A veritable Odyssey began. For two months a whole populace, a whole army, tugged at this stubborn, long-necked demon. The way was patrolled unceasingly by troops of cavalry to guard against a Christian attempt to snatch the treasure. Night and day hundreds, perhaps thousands, of workmen toiled on the roads, strengthening them, filling ruts and pot-holes, to ease the passage of the unwieldy burden, which in the end damaged the surface for months to come. Fifty yoke of oxen were harnessed in front of the train of wagons on which, like the obelisk brought long before from Egypt to Rome, the weight of the metal giant was skilfully distributed. To right and to left, two hundred men were unceasingly occupied in the support of the tottering burden; while fifty carpenters and wagoners were engaged in changing and greasing wooden rollers, strengthening props, and building bridges. It will readily be understood that the progress of this unwieldy

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

caravan across the hills and the plains was exceedingly slow. Astounded peasants peeped from their villages, crossing themselves as they watched the War God, attended by his priests and servants, transported from one country to another. Soon his brethren, delivered in turn from their clay moulds, followed him on his way. Once more human will had achieved the impossible. The black mouths of twenty or thirty such creatures gaped at Byzantium. Heavy artillery had made its entry into the history of war. The duel between the millennial walls of the capital of the Eastern Emperor and the new guns of the new Sultan was about to begin.

A LAST HOPE

Slowly, but persistently and irresistibly, the mammoth guns, like biting leviathans, pulverized the walls of Byzantium. At first there were but six or seven shots a day; but the Sultan continually installed new members of his formidable battery, and kept them increasingly supplied with powder and with stone cannon-balls, until at each concentrated discharge, amid clouds of dust, a new breach would appear in the crumbling masonry. Under cover of night, the besieged extemporized repairs with barks of timber and bales of linen; but the eight thousand defenders were no longer fighting behind inviolable walls; and they looked forward with terror to the decisive hour when Mahmud's one hundred and fifty thousand men would receive orders for the final assault upon the ravaged fortifications. Surely it was time for Europe, for Christendom, to remember the promise of help? Numbers of women, surrounded by their children, kneeled in the churches before ikons and reliquaries; and from the watchtowers, by night and by day, the soldiers scrutinized the Sea of Marmora in the hope that the

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

expected Papal and Venetian fleets would appear to drive away the swarm of enemy patrols.

On April 20, a fortnight after the opening of the siege, there came a signal. It was three in the morning when the beacon flamed, for sails had been espied in the west. Not, indeed, the mighty Christian armada of the defenders' dreams. Still, running before the wind there came three big Genoese warships, and in their midst, protected by them, a fourth boat, a Byzantine grain-transport. The inhabitants of Constantinople flocked that morning to the sea-wall to welcome the bringers of aid. But Mahmud had already left his purple tent. Having mounted his charger, he galloped to the shore of the Turkish anchorage, and commanded his admiral, at all hazards, to prevent these relief ships from entering the Golden Horn.

For this enterprise no less than one hundred and fifty Turkish ships were available. They were small craft, indeed; but instantly thousands of oars splashed, and the caravels moved to attack the galleons. The former were provided with grappling-irons, fire-balls, and catapults. But the latter had a fair wind, and recked little of the yells and the missiles that came from the Turks. Majestically the four of them sailed through the enemy fleet, making for the Golden Horn, where the celebrated chain, which could be stretched from Stamboul to Galata, would afford them secure protection against attack. The galleons were close to the entrance, and the watchers on the walls—persons of both sexes—threw themselves on their knees to thank God and the saints for this crowning mercy. The chain clanked and rattled as it was lowered to admit the ships.

But now a horrible thing occurred. The wind dropped. As if arrested by a magnet, the four relieving craft stopped dead, their progress stayed when they were no more than a stone's-throw from the harbour of refuge.

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

With shouts of jubilation from the crews, the pack of hostile galleys rushed to attack the becalmed vessels, which stood as motionless as four towers. Like stag-hounds hanging on the flanks of the monarch of the glen, the little ships grappled with the big ones. Axes were used to hole the sides of the galleons; boarders climbed up the anchor chains, hurling lighted torches at the sails and fire-balls on to the decks. The Turkish admiral boldly advanced in his flagship to ram the transport, and the two were soon interlocked in mortal combat. For a while the Genoese, having higher decks and being partially armoured, were able to repel boarders, against whom they used steel and stones and Greek fire. But the odds were too great, and the unequal struggle could not last long. The relieving fleet seemed to have no chance of escaping destruction.

This was a dreadful sight for the besieged. From the vantage-ground of the ramparts, almost as close as spectators of the fierce combats of the hippodrome, they could now watch the sea-fight with its apparently inevitable outcome. Within two hours, assuredly, those who had arrived to bring help would themselves be beyond aid. Vain had been the attempt to succour. The despairing Greeks, on the walls of Constantinople, no more than a short bowshot from their Christian brethren, clenched their fists and gnashed their teeth in impotent wrath. Many of them, gesticulating wildly, tried to incite their friends to more strenuous resistance. Others, raising their hands to heaven, called upon Christ and the Archangel Michael, and appealed for a miracle to the numerous saints to which the churches and monasteries of Byzantium were dedicated—to the saints who had protected the city for so many hundred years. Across the water the Turks were crying in the opposite sense, and were praying with no less zeal to Allah for the victory of their side and for the defeat of the *giaoours*.

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

For the Turks, too, the sea-fight had assumed the aspect of a gladiatorial struggle. The Sultan galloped again to the shore. Surrounded by his pashas he rode into the water until it reached his charger's belly and until his mantle was wetted. He made a speaking trumpet of his hands, and shouted angrily to his sailors to take or destroy the Christian ships, no matter at what risk. Again and again, when the galleys were repulsed, he uttered curses. Brandishing his sabre, he yelled to the admiral: "If you are not victorious, you would do well not to return alive."

The four ships from the West had put up a stout fight, but their defeat was imminent, for ammunition was running out, and the Italian seamen were exhausted by hours of battling against an enemy by which they were hopelessly outnumbered. The sun was sinking; night was at hand. In an hour, if they had not before then been successfully boarded by the Turks, the current would carry them unresistingly ashore, where the enemy was in full force.

What now happened, however, came like the long-desired miracle to the despairing, howling, lamenting multitude of Byzantium. The wind was rising, and a light breeze filled the sails. The battle-worn ships began to forge ahead. Triumphantly they made way, shaking themselves free from their tormentors. They were saved. Amid exultant shouts from the watchers on the walls, the four of them moved in succession into the harbour of refuge. The clattering chain was lifted into its place. Behind them, dispersed upon the sea, lay the Turkish galleys, numerous but defeated. Once more hope hovered like a purple cloud above the capital of the Eastern Empire.

A FLEET ACROSS THE HILLS

The exuberant joy of the besieged lasted through the

night. The dark hours titillate the senses, stimulate imagination, and encourage hope to tell a flattering tale. Sweet is the solace of dreams. For a night, then, the Byzantines believed that they were saved. Here were four ships which had got safely through the blockade, bringing men and provisions. Week after week, others would follow. Europe had not forgotten them, and the inhabitants of the beleaguered city had little difficulty in persuading themselves that the siege was as good as raised, the discouragement and defeat of the enemy certain.

But Mahmud, likewise, was a dreamer—a dreamer of a rare and efficient sort, one of those exceptional dreamers who are able to translate dreams into realities. While the galleons were believing themselves secure in the harbour of the Golden Horn the Sultan was making a plan so audacious that it ranks with the boldest exploits of Hannibal or Napoleon. Byzantium lay before him like a tempting fruit, almost within his grasp, but still out of reach. The chief obstacle to the plucking was the Golden Horn, a blind alley of the sea which protected one flank of Constantinople. Entry was barred by the neutral Genoese territory of Galata, and by the chain stretched across the mouth of the inlet. No frontal attack was possible. The Christian ships were accessible only from the inner basin, which lay beyond the Genoese neutral zone. But how could he get a fleet into the inner basin? To build one would need months, and he was too impatient for that.

Well, he had a fleet already, of no use to him where it was, so he would convey it across the tongue of land into the inner harbour. So fantastic was the scheme of transporting ships over the hills, that neither the Byzantines, nor the Genoese of Galata, gave a thought to the possibility, any more than the Romans or the Austrians supposed that the Alps would not prove an insuperable

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

obstacle to Hannibal or Bonaparte, who both effected the crossing with incredible rapidity. The teaching of experience was that ships were made for the water. They could neither row nor sail over the mountains. But it has always been characteristic of an insuperable will that it knows nothing of impossibilities. A military genius is one who in wartime disregards the rules of war, and, when the moment comes, relies on creative improvisation instead of on time-worn methods.

An immense undertaking, one almost without parallel in history, was begun. Logs were swiftly rounded and shaped into a framework in which each ship could stand as safely as if it had been in a modern floating dock. Meanwhile thousands of diggers got to work on the mule-track which led over Pera hill, widening it and smoothing out its worst inequalities. To distract the enemy's attention from what was in hand, Mahmud kept up a fierce bombardment both by day and by night—a bombardment which would have been a sheer waste of ammunition had it not masked the passing of the galleys overland from the sea into the inner harbour. While the besieged were thinking only of an attack from the landward side, the galleys, each in its cage, were dragged one by one on well-greased rollers by numberless yoke of oxen (the crews helping in the work) up the hill and down the other side. As soon as night veiled what was going on, this amazing movement began. Silently, like all that is great, carefully thought out, like all that is overwhelmingly successful, the miracle of miracles was worked. A fleet crossed the hills.

The decisive characteristic of crushing military blows has ever been surprise. Here Mahmud's peculiar genius was well sustained. The secret of his plans had been carefully kept. "Did a hair of my beard know my thoughts, I would pluck it out," this inspired and crafty schemer once said of himself. While his cannons were

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

thundering at the walls, his orders were obeyed. During the night of April 22, seventy ships were transported over hill and dale, through vineyards and fields and forests. Next morning the Byzantines rubbed their eyes, thinking they must still be asleep. An enemy fleet, appearing as if by magic, was installed under the Turkish flag in their inaccessible inner harbour. They could not believe what they saw, but trumpets and cymbals and drums were sounding immediately beneath the wall. The Golden Horn, with the exception of the part opposite neutral Galata where the Christian fleet was bottled up, was in the hands of the Sultan and his army. Across pontoon bridges, Mahmud could lead his troops against this weaker segment of the defences, which must now be strongly occupied by the Byzantines at the cost of drawing men from the rest of the fortifications. The iron fist was closing more tightly on the throat of the victim.

EUROPE TO THE RESCUE!

The besieged no longer had any illusions. They knew that, thus taken in the flank, eight thousand against one hundred and fifty thousand, they could not, failing outside help, much longer hold their devastated walls. But had not the Signoria of Venice promised to send ships? Could the Pope remain indifferent when Hagia Sophia, the most splendid church in Christendom, was in danger of becoming one of the mosques of the infidel? Was it possible that Europe, torn by her own quarrels, racked by a hundred base jealousies, still failed to understand the threat to Western civilization? Perhaps the relieving fleet had been ready for some time? If it had not yet arrived, this could only be from inadvertence. It must be waiting in the Aegean. Nothing more would be needed than to make their co-religionists fully aware of the disastrous consequences of further delay.

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

But how get into touch with the Venetian admiral? The Sea of Marmora was crowded with Turkish war-ships. To send out the whole fleet would doom it to destruction, and would also rob the defence of several hundred soldiers. A very small craft, which could be handled by a tiny crew, should make the venture. Twelve in all (were there justice in history they would be as famous as Jason, and yet we do not know the name of a single one) were chosen. The brigantine hoisted Turkish colours; her men were clad in Mohammedan raiment and donned turban or tarboosh; on May 3 the chain was noiselessly lowered; and with muffled oars, under cover of darkness, the little ship emerged from the Golden Horn. Wonderful to relate, she made her way safely across the Sea of Marmora and through the Dardanelles. Excess of courage, as so often, had outwitted the enemy. Mahmud had thought of everything except the inconceivable, that a solitary ship manned by twelve heroes would dare to make a Voyage of the Argonauts through his overmastering naval force.

But tragical was the disappointment. No Venetian sails were discoverable in the Aegean. There was no fleet ready to relieve Constantinople. Venice and the Pope had forgotten Byzantium. All the rest of Europe, immersed in parochial interests, regardless of honour and of oaths, ignored the desperate plight of the capital of the Eastern Empire. Again and again in history have recurred these tragical moments when, an effective union of forces being requisite to save European civilization, the rulers and the States have been unable to hold their petty dissensions and rivalries in leash. Genoa was more concerned with getting the better of Venice, and Venice with getting the better of Genoa, than were the pair of them in joining forces against the common enemy. The sea was void. In despair the valiant men rowed their nutshell from island to island, to find all the ports occu-

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

pied by the enemy. No Christian ship would now risk entering the war zone.

What was to be done? Naturally enough, some of the twelve lost heart. Why run risks of a return to Constantinople? They had no good news to bring. Perhaps the town had already been taken. Anyhow, should they go back, nothing awaited them but death or imprisonment. Nevertheless the majority—heroes whose names will never be known—decided to make for the port of departure. They had been sent for tidings, and tidings they would bring, however unwelcome. The little ship, therefore, put about to row through the Dardanelles once more, across the Sea of Marmora, through the Turkish fleet. On May 23, when Constantinople had almost forgotten that the brigantine had ever been dispatched, and, during the three weeks, must certainly have given her up for lost, the watchmen on the walls began to wave flags, having espied a small craft pulling sturdily towards the Golden Horn. When the Turks, enlightened by the frantic cheering of the besieged, realized that this brigantine which impudently flew Turkish colours must be an enemy, their galleys advanced, but were too late to intercept her. For a moment the Byzantines were delighted with the hope that Europe had remembered them at last. But by nightfall the disastrous truth had spread through the city. Christendom had left Byzantium to its fate.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE STORM

When the siege had been pressed almost daily for six weeks, Mahmud grew impatient. His guns had made many breaches in the walls, but his attempts at taking the city by storm had been repulsed with great slaughter. There were only two possibilities: to raise the siege; or to make another attack in full force, hoping that it would

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

be successful. The Sultan called his pashas to a council of war, and his passionate will overruled their objections. The decisive assault was fixed for May 29.

Mahmud made his arrangements with customary resolution. A solemn festival was ordained. Every man in the besieging force, from the highest to the lowest, was to fulfil the ritual which Islam prescribed for such occasions, to make seven ablutions, and thrice in the day to repeat the great prayer. The remaining supplies of powder and shot were brought to the front for use in a last furious bombardment, and the various detachments of the troops were assigned their places in the assault. The Sultan did not take a moment's rest throughout the day. From the Golden Horn to the Sea of Marmora he rode from tent to tent to encourage the officers by personal exhortation and to fire the ranks with enthusiasm. As a good psychologist he knew the best way of stimulating zeal to the uttermost, so he made a terrible promise, which to his honour and dishonour was terribly fulfilled. His criers were sent to all parts of the camp, and each, after a trumpet blast, made the following proclamation:

"By the name of Allah, by the name of Mohammed and the four thousand prophets, by the soul of his father, Sultan Murad, by the heads of his children, and by his scimitar, Mahmud swears that when the town has been taken by storm the troops will have an unrestricted right to three days' rapine. Everything within the walls—furniture, jewels and trinkets, gold and silver, men, women, and children—shall belong to the victorious soldiery, the Sultan himself renouncing any reward beyond the glory of having conquered this last bulwark of the Eastern Empire."

The troops hailed the savage announcement with delight. Fierce shouts of "Allah-il-Allah!" and of "Loot! Loot!" issued from thousands of throats to intimidate

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

the trembling Byzantines. The word "Loot" became a war-cry, re-echoing to the rattle of drums, the clash of cymbals, and the fanfare of trumpets. At night the camp was illuminated. The besieged shuddered with anticipation as from the walls they watched myriads of torches flaming in the plain and on the hills, while to the accompaniment of martial music the enemy celebrated the coming victory and the promised sack of the city. This was a cruel, noisy ceremonial, like that performed by pagan priests before a sacrifice. Then at midnight, by Mahmud's order, the lights were simultaneously extinguished, the innumerable voices hushed. The sudden silence and darkness, with the impression of bloodthirsty resolve that lay behind them, were, if possible, even more alarming to those who were awaiting their defeat than had been the previous pandemonium of glare and vociferation.

THE LAST MASS IN HAGIA SOPHIA

The besieged needed neither spy nor renegade to tell them what was coming. They knew that Mahmud intended to take the city by storm, and a foreboding of imminent peril hung over them like a thunder-cloud. Though usually distracted by party strife and religious schism, the population was consolidated during these last hours, for in such extremities we can always witness the unwonted spectacle of harmony. To make all fully aware of what it was incumbent to defend—their faith, their heritage from a great past, and their joint civilization—the Basileus commanded a moving ceremony. The entire population, Orthodox and Catholic, priestly and lay, young and old, rich and poor, assembled in procession. No one was to stay at home, and no one wanted to. Formed in line, singing the Kyrie Elcison, they marched through the main streets of the inner town, and

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

then made the circuit of the walls. The ikons and the relics from the churches were borne in front. Wherever the defences had been breached by the enemy fire one of the sacred images was hung, in the hope that it would keep out the infidel more effectively than could mortal arms. While this was going on, Emperor Constantine summoned the senators, the noblemen, and the officers of high rank, to stimulate their zeal by a last address. He could not indeed, like Mahmud, promise them invaluable loot; but he dwelt upon the renown they would earn for themselves throughout Christendom if they repulsed the onslaught and upon the terrible fate which would befall them if defeated by the merciless Moslems. The Emperor knew as well as the Sultan that this day marked a turning-point in history.

Now began the last scene, unprecedented in Europe, characterized by the ecstasy of menacing destruction. In Hagia Sophia, the most splendid cathedral in the world, the building where the fraternal reunion of the severed Eastern and Western Churches had so recently been celebrated, those consecrated to death were gathered. Round the Emperor thronged the courtiers, the nobles, the Greek and the Roman clerics, the Byzantine forces and the fully-armed soldiers and sailors from Genoa and Venice; behind them kneeled in reverent silence thousands upon thousands of devotees murmuring their prayers—the fear-stricken populace. The candles hung beneath the mighty arches wrestled with the darkness, spiritual no less than corporeal, which encompassed a crowd united in supplication. Here was present the very soul as well as the body of the imperial capital, imploring Almighty God for rescue. The Patriarch uplifted his voice in a powerful appeal, the choir sang the responses; for the last time Church music, the eternal voice of the West, was heard in this titanic edifice. Then one after another, the Emperor first, the members of the

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

congregation kneeled before the altar to receive the Eucharist, while prayer and chanting rose unceasingly around them. What was to prove a Mass for the Death of the Eastern Empire was in progress, for this would be the last time when Christian rites were celebrated in the cathedral of Justinian.

After the ceremony, the Emperor went back to the palace to beg the forgiveness of his underlings and servants for any wrong he might have done them. Then, swinging himself into the saddle, he rode—like Mahmud at the same hour—from one end of the walls to the other to encourage the soldiers. By the time he had finished his round, night had fallen. No further voice was raised, nor clash of arms heard. But with throbbing hearts the thousands within the walls awaited the dawning of the day which was to bring them death.

KERKAPORTA, THE FORGOTTEN DOOR

At one in the morning the Sultan gave the signal. The great standard was unfurled. With a universal shout of "Allah, Allah-il-Allah!" a hundred thousand armed men, bearing ropes and scaling-ladders, advanced against the walls. The rattle of drums, the sound of trumpets and cymbals and pipes, mingled with the human voices and the thunder of the guns to make a general uproar. The irregulars, the bashi-bazouks, were sent first; for in Mahmud's pitiless plan these half-naked men were to be sacrificed, and only when the enemy had been sufficiently wearied and weakened by the first onslaught was a decisive attack to be made by picked soldiers—the shock troops. Scourged forward, carrying hundreds of ladders, they ran in the darkness, scaled the battlements, were thrust back, but tried again and again—for behind them came the regulars with orders to cut down any that endeavoured to retreat, and who drove

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

them on to almost certain death. The defenders still had the upper hand, for stones and arrows could make no impression on their chain-armour. But their great danger, as Mahmud had foreseen, was fatigue. In their heavy equipment they had unceasingly to repulse the light irregulars, moving swiftly from one threatened point to another, and ere long they became exhausted. By three, when they had been fighting for two hours, when darkness was giving place to the twilight of dawn, and when the picked troops, the Anatolians, were advancing to the attack, the position of the defenders was growing difficult. They were highly trained men, these Anatolians; they, too, wore chain-mail; and they were fresh, whereas the Byzantines who manned the walls concentrated their forces wherever there were breaches, had become battle-worn. Still, they continued to put up a stout fight, and the Sultan had to send forward his last reserves, the janissaries, his body-guard, the élite of the Ottoman army. In person he led the twelve thousand men accounted the best troops in fifteenth-century Europe, and with triumphant shouts they flung themselves upon the tired *giaours*. It was certainly time to sound the alarm-bells throughout the town summoning the last valid or half-valid men to the walls, and to bring the sailors from the harbour, for the decisive hour was at hand. As luck would have it, at this juncture Giustiniani, the bold condottiere, leader of the Genoese forces, was struck down by a stone from a sling, and was carried sorely wounded to his ship. This loss paralysed the defenders for a time. But the Emperor Constantine flung himself into the vacant place, and again the scaling-ladders were hurled down. Resolution was matched by resolution, the defence was as vigorous as the attack, and for an instant it seemed as if Byzantium were saved. Then the fate of the city was decided by one of those tragical and enigmatic incidents upon which destiny so often turns.

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

Something utterly improbable occurred. A few Turks had crossed the outer wall through one of the numerous breaches not far from the place where the main onslaught was concentrated. They would never have ventured to try scaling the inner wall. But while inquisitively and without set plan they explored the interspace, they noticed that, by an incredible oversight, one of the doors in the inner wall was open. This door, known as Kerkaporta, was a small one intended for use by foot-passengers in times of peace; and, just because it was of such trifling military importance, it was left unsecured when the great gates were all carefully closed and guarded. Amid the excitements of the previous night its existence had been forgotten. The janissaries, to their great astonishment, had found a weak spot in the frowning bulwark. At first they suspected a trap. It seemed absurd that at a time when every breach, every loophole, every gate in the walls was being strenuously defended by men supplied with boiling oil and armed with javelins, this Kerkaporta should provide an open and unwatched way into the heart of the town. However, they plucked up courage, summoned reinforcements, and without resistance a whole company passed through to assail the unsuspecting defenders in the rear. These, seeing Turkish warriors behind them, raised the cry which is far more deadly than the missiles of enemy cannon: "The city is taken!" The Turks within and without the walls echoed the false cry: "The city is taken!" Thereupon the defence collapsed. The mercenaries, supposing themselves betrayed, deserted their posts and fled to the ships in the Golden Horn. Vainly did Constantine, with a few faithful followers, try to stop the retreat, to rally his men, to make headway against the besiegers. He fell, unrecognized, in the hand-to-hand struggle. Not until next day was his body disentangled from a heap of corpses, when, because his purple shoes decked with a golden

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

eagle were conspicuous, it became plain that with Roman valour the last Emperor of the Eastern Empire had fallen in the vain attempt to defend his realm. By a whimsical chance Kerkaporta, the forgotten door, decided the course of history.

DOWN WITH THE CROSS

History sometimes plays with figures. The sack of Byzantium by the Turks took place almost exactly one thousand years after the plundering of Rome by the Vandals. Mahmud was cruelly faithful to his plighted word. After the first massacre of the defenders, he allowed his warriors to do as they pleased with houses and palaces, churches and cloisters, men, women, and children. Like fiends they raged through the streets, each afraid of being outpaced by the others. The pillagers turned their attention first to the churches, where jewels abounded. Those who broke into a house hastened to hoist a flag that other looters might know an embargo had been laid here. The booty consisted not only of precious stones, money, and portable goods in general, for the women would fetch a price at the seraglio, the men and the children in the slave-market. The crowds of unhappy mortals who had sought refuge in the churches were ruthlessly flogged out; the old people were promptly butchered as useless mouths; the young, bound together like cattle, were herded in droves. Aimless destruction went hand in hand with looting. Whatever in the way of relics and works of art the Crusaders had left behind in a hardly less indiscriminate sack of Constantinople, the victorious Moslems now destroyed. Valuable pictures were cut to pieces; statues were hammered into fragments; books which contained the wisdom of the ages, and should have preserved for all

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

time the wealth of Greek thought and imagination, were burned or thrown into the gutter. Never will mankind know all the disaster which befell it in that fateful hour when Kerkaporta door was left open, nor how much was for ever lost to the world of the spirit through the pillaging of Rome, Alexandria, and Byzantium.

Not until the afternoon that followed the great victory, when the first fury of slaughter was spent, did Mahmud enter the conquered city. Proud and grave of mien, he rode on his magnificent charger past the wild scenes of spoliation without turning to glance at them, for had he not promised his soldiers they should not be disturbed in their dreadful sport? He who had won all was not thinking of immediate profit, but guided his horse towards the cathedral, the supreme jewel of Byzantium. For more than fifty days he had looked longingly at the shining, unattainable dome of Hagia Sophia. Now he could enter its bronze doors as a conqueror. But once more he curbed his impatience. He must tender thanks to Allah, before consecrating this magnificent house of prayer to the true God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Humbly he dismounted, and bowed his head to the ground in prayer. Then he took a handful of earth and strewed it on his hair in token that he was but a mortal who must not over-estimate his triumph. Only then, when he had abased himself before his Maker, did the Sultan rise and, as the first of Allah's servants, enter the cathedral of Justinian, the church of Holy Wisdom, Hagia Sophia.

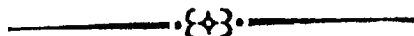
Curiously and much moved did Mahmud contemplate the splendid building, whose lofty arches scintillated with marble and mosaics, and whose delicate traceries rose out of the gloom into the light. Not to him, he thought, but to God, belonged this sublime palace of prayer. Instantly he summoned an imam, who mounted the pulpit and thence proclaimed the Faith of the

THE CONQUEST OF BYZANTIUM

Prophet, while the Padishah, turning towards Mecca, uttered the first invocation to Allah, the Ruler of the World, that had ever been intoned in this temple of the Christ. Next day workmen were instructed to remove all signs of the creed of the Crucified; the altars were torn down, the mosaics with their impious graven images were covered with whitewash, and the Rood, which for nine hundred years had spread its arms wide to embrace the sorrows of the world, fell with a crash on the paved floor.

The noise of its fall re-echoed through Christendom, shaking the whole Western world. The news aroused terror in Rome, Genoa, Venice, and Florence; like the rattle of distant thunder the tidings came to Paris and crossed the Rhine; and a shuddering Europe realized that, thanks to her callous indifference, something which would hamper and paralyse her forces for centuries, a fatally destructive element, had entered Byzantium through the forgotten door of Kerkaporta. But neither in history nor in individual human lives does regret bring back a lost opportunity, and a thousand years cannot atone for the failure of an hour.

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY



A SHIP IS MADE READY

ON returning to Spain after his discovery of the West Indies, Columbus, marching in triumph through the thronged streets of Seville and Barcelona, had with him a great number of precious and remarkable things. They were red-skinned men of a race never seen in Europe before; strange birds and beasts, such as multi-coloured screaming parrots and cumbrous tapirs; remarkable vegetables and fruits, some of which were soon to be acclimatized in Europe—Indian corn, tobacco, and coconuts. All these unfamiliar objects were admiringly scrutinized by the vociferating multitude; but what most intrigued the King and Queen and the counsellors were a few boxes and baskets containing gold. Columbus had not brought much gold back with him; only a few trinkets, obtained from the natives by barter or robbery, one or two small ingots, and a handful of gold-dust—the whole quantity not more than would suffice for the minting of a few hundred ducats. But Columbus, a highly imaginative man, who was always ready to believe what he wanted to believe, and who for that reason had been so splendidly successful in making his way to the Indies, declared ostentatiously that these were no more than samples. He had received trustworthy reports of the existence of enormously rich gold-mines in the new islands; had been told that there were many regions where an abundance of the precious metal was to be found immediately beneath the surface of the earth.

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

As much as one wanted could be dug up with an ordinary spade. Farther to the south there were realms where the kings drank out of golden goblets, and where gold was of less value than lead was in Spain. Ferdinand the Catholic, who was always short of money, was entranced when he heard of this new Ophir, which would be his own; for the nature of Columbus's sublime folly had not yet been disclosed, and the navigator's promises were accepted at their face value. A big fleet was promptly equipped for a second voyage. No longer was it necessary to use recruiting agents to drum up a crew. Tidings of the newly-discovered mines where gold could easily be obtained in any quantity had driven Spain crazy; and people flocked by hundreds and by thousands in order to take ship for El Dorado.

But what a turbid stream it was that greed now conjured up from the towns, the villages, and the hamlets. There did not come only noblemen eager to regild their scutcheons; and others applied besides bold adventurers and valiant soldiers. It seemed as if all the filth and scum of Spain were flocking to Palos and Cadiz. Pick-pockets, footpads, and robbers, who expected to find a yet more lucrative handicraft in El Dorado; debtors who wished to escape from their creditors; husbands who were tired of their wives' scolding tongues; all the desperadoes, all the branded, all the men who were "wanted" by the alguacils—reported for service in the fleet, a medley of ruined scoundrels determined to get rich quickly, and ready, with that end in view, for any deed of violence and for any crime. Columbus had infected people with his own imagination, until they had come to believe that in the new Indies you would merely have to thrust a spade into the ground to disclose shining nuggets. So convinced were the poor fools of this, that the well-to-do among the emigrants took with them servants and mules for the more convenient transport of large quantities of gold.

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

Those who were unable to secure enrolment as members of the expedition tried another plan. Without bothering much about royal permission, dissolute adventurers equipped ships on their own account, in the hope of getting quickly to the land of gold. At one stroke, Spain was freed from many of its undesirables and from its most dangerous rascals.

The governor of Española (which later was divided into Haiti and Santo Domingo) was alarmed at the coming of these unbidden guests to the island which was his charge. Year after year ships came bringing new loads of lawless resolute. These latter, themselves, were bitterly disappointed when they found that gold was not, as had been fabled, to be dug up wherever you pleased, and that not a drachm of the precious metal could be extorted from the unhappy aborigines, upon whom they fell like ravening beasts. Thus there roamed hither and thither sturdy rogues and robbers, a terror to the unhappy Indians and a perpetual nuisance to the governor. Vainly did he try to make colonists of them, assigning them land and cattle, not excepting human cattle in plenty, giving each of them seventy natives as slaves. Neither the high-born hidalgos nor the sometime foot-pads had any taste for agriculture. They had not come to the Indies in order to plant wheat and look after cattle. Instead of troubling about seed-time and harvest, they wrought havoc among the natives (it is said that the whole indigenous population became extinct within a few years); or they loafed in the taverns. Within a short time most of them were so heavily in debt that they had to sell the very shirts from their backs, and must offer to pledge their skins to the usurers.

It came, therefore, as welcome news to this ruined riff-raff in Española that a well-to-do jurist had come to the island, the "bachiller" Martin Fernandez de Enciso, who, in 1510, wished to fit out a vessel and provide it

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

with a crew in order to go to the aid of his colony on the American continent. Two famous adventurers, Alonzo de Ojeda and Diego de Nicuesa, had in 1509 secured from King Ferdinand the privilege of making a settlement on the coast of Venezuela, near the Isthmus of Panama. Somewhat prematurely they had christened it *Castilla de Oro*. Intoxicated by the resounding name and fooled by travellers' tales, Enciso, who knew more of Law than of the real world, had invested the bulk of his fortune in the enterprise. But no gold arrived from the newly-established colony at San Sebastian in the Gulf of Uraba; only piteous appeals for help. Half of those engaged in the venture had lost their lives in fights with the natives, and the other half were dying of hunger. In the hope of saving his investment, Enciso realized the rest of his property to equip a relief expedition. Directly the news was bruited abroad that soldiers were needed, the desperadoes and loafers of *Española* were eager to avail themselves of the opportunity. The one thing they wanted was to get out of reach of their creditors and away from the watchful eye of the governor. But the creditors were on the alert. They perceived that those who owed them the largest sums were the most eager to embark for No Man's Land, so they besieged the governor with petitions that none should be enrolled without his express permission. The governor agreed. A strict watch was set. Enciso's ship had to anchor outside the port, being constantly patrolled by government boats which saw to it that no unauthorized person should be smuggled on board. Greatly enraged were the desperadoes, who feared death much less than they feared honest work or the debtor's prison, to see the ship set sail without them.

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

THE MAN IN THE CHEST

Enciso's ship steered for the American continent before a favourable wind, and the outlines of Española had soon sunk beneath the horizon. The sea was calm, and there was nothing noteworthy except the behaviour of a powerful bloodhound, who restlessly paced the deck, sniffing as he went. This bloodhound was a famous beast named Leoncico, and his sire Becericco was even more renowned. No one knew to whom the mighty creature belonged, or how he had got on board. After a while, however, attention was drawn to the fact that Leoncico was particularly interested in a huge provision chest that had been shipped just before departure. Now, unexpectedly, this chest was opened from within, and out of it there clambered a man who appeared to be about five-and-thirty years of age, fully armed with sword, helmet, and shield, like St. James, the patron saint of Castile. He was Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, thus making the first demonstration of his amazing boldness and cunning. A native of Jerez de los Caballeros, though of noble birth he had enlisted as a private under Rodrigo de Bastidas for a voyage to the New World, and, after many wanderings, had been cast away on Española. Vainly had the governor tried to turn Nuñez de Balboa into a good colonist. After a few months he left his plot of land to look after itself, and was so hopelessly bankrupt that he did not know how to escape from the duns. But while the other debtors stood on the shore with clenched fists watching the government patrol boats which made it impossible for them to escape on Enciso's ship, Nuñez de Balboa craftily broke through the cordon by hiding in an empty provision chest and having himself carried on board by accomplices, hoping that he would escape detection amid the tumult of departure. Not until he

knew that the ship must have made so much progress as to prevent the captain putting back to Española in order to get rid of him, did the stowaway disclose himself.

"Bachiller" Enciso was a law-man, and, like law-men in general, had little sense of the romantic. As alcalde, or police-superintendent, of the new colony he had no wish to be burdened with defaulters and others of the same kidney. He therefore roughly informed Nuñez de Balboa that he had no intention of taking a stowaway to the mainland, but would maroon the adventurer on the first island they sighted, whether it was inhabited or not.

However, matters did not reach this pass. While the ship was continuing its voyage to Castilla de Oro, it was met by a crowded boat (a wonder in those days, when there were no more than a few dozen vessels in these still unknown seas), under the captainship of a man whose name was ere long to ring through the world, Francisco Pizarro. He and his crew had come from Enciso's colony of San Sebastian, and at first they were regarded as mutineers or deserters. But to Enciso's consternation they reported that the colony of San Sebastian no longer existed. They were the last survivors. Ojeda, the commandant, had deserted with the ship. Those left behind, having merely two brigantines, had been compelled to wait until death had reduced their numbers to seventy, who could find accommodation on these two small boats. One of the brigantines had been shipwrecked, lost with all on board. Pizarro's four-and-thirty men were the remnants of the population of Castilla de Oro.

Whither away, now? After hearing Pizarro's story, Enciso's followers had little inclination for exposing themselves to the swampy climate of the abandoned settlement or to the poisoned arrows of the natives. What possibility was open but a return to Española? This was

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

Vasco Nuñez de Balboa's opportunity. He explained that his first voyage with Rodrigo de Bastidas had made him well acquainted with the coast of Central America. They had discovered, on the banks of a stream where gold could be washed out of the sand, a place named Darien. The natives were friendly. That would be the region to found a settlement, instead of the unlucky Castilla de Oro.

Like one man, Enciso's crew voted in favour of Balboa's scheme. The course was altered for Darien on the Isthmus of Panama. After the usual butchery of the natives, they established themselves there, for, since there was gold among the spoils, the desperados decided upon a permanent settlement, and, in pious gratitude, they named their new town Santa Maria de la Antigua del Darien.

A DANGEROUS RISE

Soon the unlucky financier of the colony, "Bachiller" Enciso, had good reason for being sorry that he had not thrown the provision chest overboard with Nuñez de Balboa inside, for within a few weeks the bold adventurer had got all the reins of power into his hands. As a jurist in whom the ideas of discipline and regulation had become ingrained, Enciso, since he was *Alcalde Maior*, and the governor of the colony was at present undiscoverable, was the representative of the Spanish Crown, and continued, from the poor Indian hut which was his headquarters, to issue edicts as solemnly and strictly as if he had been in his chambers at Seville. In this wilderness hitherto untrodden by white men, he forbade his soldiers to obtain gold by barter from the natives, traffic in gold being a Crown monopoly; and he endeavoured to impose law and order upon this undisciplined mob, but only to find that the adventurers instinctively rallied

to the man of the sword and rebelled against the man of the pen. Balboa speedily became the master of the colony; Enciso fled to save his life; and when at length Nicuesa, one of the duly appointed governors of the South American continent, arrived to establish his authority, Balboa would not allow him to land, and the unhappy governor, driven from the country in which the king had wanted to make him supreme, was drowned on the return voyage.

Nuñez de Balboa, the man from the chest, was ruler of the colony. Still, notwithstanding his success, he had an uneasy feeling. He had rebelled against his king, and was all the less likely to be pardoned because, through his fault, the lawful governor had been drowned. He knew that Enciso was on the way back to Spain, and that sooner or later he would be called to account for his rebellion. However, Spain was a long way off; and a considerable time must elapse before a ship could make the voyage to Europe and back. Being as shrewd as he was bold, he sought the best way of retaining his usurped authority as long as possible. He knew that in these troublous times success could justify any crime, and that a heavy shipment of gold for the royal treasury would probably lead to the abandonment or the delay of punitive measures. Gold was the first requisite, for gold was power.

In conjunction with Francisco Pizarro, he subjugated and robbed the indigenes of the neighbourhood, and, amid the usual massacres, secured a striking success. One of the caciques, Careta by name, whom, grossly violating the laws of hospitality, he had attacked and conquered, proposed to him, when about to be put to death, that instead of making war on the Indians he should enter into an alliance with Careta's tribe—offering his own daughter as a pledge of loyalty. Nuñez de Balboa was quick to recognize the importance of securing a trust-

worthy and powerful friend among the natives, so he accepted Careta's offer, and, still more remarkable, remained faithful to this Indian girl and sincerely attached to her down to the hour of his death. In league with Careta, he conquered the other Indian tribes of the region, acquiring so much influence over them that even Comagre, the mightiest of the chiefs, invited him to pay a friendly visit.

This visit was the turning-point in the career of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, who up till then had been nothing more than a desperado and a hardy rebel, liable to execution by the rope or the axe at the instance of Castilian justice. Comagre received him in a large and well-built stone mansion, the richness of whose furnishings amazed Balboa; and, unsolicited, the cacique presented his guest with four thousand ounces of gold. But now it was the turn of the Indian chief to be astonished. Hardly had the children of heaven, the mighty strangers whom he had received with such reverence, set eyes on the gold than they cast their dignity to the winds. Like unleashed hounds they began to fight with one another, drawing their swords, clenching their fists, shooting and raging—for each of them wished to secure the lion's share of the precious metal. Contemptuously the cacique watched the broil, with the amazement which unsophisticated savages have invariably and everywhere felt on discovering that to white men, who pride themselves on their civilization, a handful of gold seems more precious than all the intellectual and technical acquirements of culture.

At length the cacique began to address them, and the Spaniards were thrilled by the words of the interpreter. "How strange," said Comagre, "that you should fight with one another for such a trifle, that you should expose yourself to discomforts and dangers for the sake of such dross. Behind those mountains is a mighty ocean, and

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

all the rivers which empty their waters into it bring down gold. You will find a great empire there, whose inhabitants have sailing-ships much like yours, and whose kings eat and drink out of golden table-furniture. There you can get as much of this yellow metal as you please. The route thither is dangerous, for the chiefs will certainly oppose your passage; but it is only a few days' journey."

Vasco Nuñez de Balboa was greatly excited. At length he was on the track of the legendary El Dorado, of which the Spaniards had been dreaming for years. They had sought it far to the south and far to the north, and here if the cacique's story was true, he was only a few days' journey from it. Proved, too, was the existence of that additional ocean to which Columbus, Cabot, Cortereal, and other famous navigators, had vainly endeavoured to make their way. The means of circumnavigating the globe were within reach. The man who should first glimpse this new ocean and take possession of it for Spain would win immortal fame. Balboa realized the deed he would have to do if he was to secure immunity for his offences. He must be the first to cross the isthmus to the Mar del Sur, the South Sea, which was the road to the Indies; and he must conquer the new Ophir for the Spanish Crown. His fate was settled by the tidings he received in Comagre's house. Thenceforward the life of this casual adventurer had acquired a new and timeless significance.

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

There cannot be greater happiness in anyone's career than, in the prime of life, when the creative energies are undiminished, to discover a mission. Nuñez de Balboa knew what the stakes were—death on the scaffold or immortality. The first thing to do was to buy peace

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

from the Crown; to secure the condonation and legalization of the deed by which he had usurped power. That was why the rebel of yesterday now showed himself to be the most loyal of subjects, sending to Pasamonte, the royal treasurer in Española, the fifth of the gold presented by Comagre to which the Spanish monarch was legally entitled, and, in addition, being better acquainted with the ways of the world than was the arid law-man Enciso, privately dispatching a large douceur to the treasurer, whom he asked to confirm him in his office as Captain General of the colony. To make such an appointment was altogether outside the competence of the Treasurer Pasamonte, but, in exchange for the good gold, he sent Nuñez de Balboa a provisional, and substantially worthless, document. At the same time Balboa, who wished to safeguard himself in all directions, sent two of his most trusty adherents to Spain, instructing them to inform the king of his services, and to communicate the important tidings he had received from the cacique. It would be enough—such was the message Vasco Nuñez de Balboa conveyed to Seville—to supply him with a force of one thousand men. With this little army he would be able to make more important conquests for Castile than any Spaniard had made before him. He pledged himself to discover the new ocean and to annex El Dorado, which had at length been found. He, Balboa, would actually achieve what Columbus had promised to do, would succeed where the Genoese navigator had failed.

Matters now seemed to be in good train for the man whose life was forfeit, for the rebel and desperado. But the next ship from Spain brought bad news. One of his accomplices in the rebellion, whom he had previously sent to Spain in order to steal a march upon the robbed Enciso (who had gone home to complain), reported that affairs were in a bad way, and that Balboa's life was endangered. The cheated "bachiller" had brought a suit

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

in the Spanish courts, and Balboa had been sentenced to make atonement. The tidings about the nearness of the South Sea, which might have saved him, had not arrived in time. The next ship would assuredly bring one of the ministers of justice to hold Balboa to account for his rebellion. The wrongdoer was likely to get short shrift, or, if he escaped immediate execution, to be sent back to Spain in irons.

Vasco Nuñez de Balboa recognized how serious was his position. He had been condemned before the news about the South Sea and El Dorado had come to hand. Of course advantage would be taken of his information—after his head had rolled in the sand. Someone else would do his deed, the deed he had dreamed of doing; but he himself had nothing more to hope from Spain. It was known that he had expelled the lawful governor, who had gone to death by drowning; and it was known that he had arbitrarily cashiered the alcalde. He might deem himself lucky were he merely sentenced to a long term of imprisonment instead of being hurried to the block. He had no friends to count on, since he could no longer wield power, and his best advocate, gold, could not yet speak loudly enough to win him a pardon. Only one thing could save him from punishment for his audacity, and that was still greater audacity. If he were to reach the other ocean and the new Ophir before the representative of Spanish justice arrived, and before the catchpolls had got him in their grip, he could save himself. Here, at the end of the known world, only one form of flight was open to him—flight into a magnificent deed, flight into immortality.

Nuñez de Balboa therefore made up his mind to set about the conquest of the unknown ocean without waiting for the thousand soldiers he had asked from Spain—and also without waiting for the arrival of the officers of the law. It would be better to undertake the tremendous

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

hazard with a few companions as resolute as himself; better to perish honourably while attempting one of the boldest adventures of all time, than to have his hands tied and meet a shameful death on the scaffold. Nuñez de Balboa called the members of the colony together, and, without blinking the difficulties of the enterprise, announced his determination to cross the isthmus and asked who among them were ready to follow him. His courage animated the others. One hundred and ninety soldiers, nearly all the valid men in the colony, volunteered for service. Little preparation was needed, since they were perpetually at war and therefore always ready. On September 1, 1513, to escape the gallows or gaol, Nuñez de Balboa, hero and bandit, adventurer and rebel, began his march into immortality.

IMPERISHABLE MOMENT

The crossing of the Isthmus of Panama began in the province of Coyba, the little realm of Cacique Careta, whose daughter was Balboa's mistress. As events were to show, Nuñez de Balboa did not choose the place where the isthmus was narrowest, and through his ignorance of the topography he lengthened the dangerous transit by several days. But it was all-important for him, when making so venturesome a leap into the unknown, to protect his rear and to safeguard his return by the support of a friendly tribe of Indians. In ten large canoes the men were conveyed from Darien to Coyba—one hundred and ninety soldiers armed with spears, swords, arquebuses, and cross-bows, and accompanied by a large pack of the dreaded bloodhounds. Their ally, the cacique, placed his Indians at their disposal as porters and guides; and on September 6 began that glorious march over the isthmus which was to test to the utmost the will-power even of these brave and tried adventurers.

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

The first stage of the journey was through a hothouse, equatorial atmosphere, across the swampy flats whose fever-stricken vapours, hundreds of years later, cost so many thousand lives in the construction of the Panama Canal. With axes and with swords a path had to be cut through the untrodden and poisonous jungle of the lianas. The leaders of the men, as if in a huge, green mine, made an adit for their comrades to follow them—this little army of conquistadors, weapons ever ready to their hands, senses stretch by day and by night, prepared to ward off an attack from the natives. It was suffocating in the damp darkness between the giant tree-trunks, on whose crowns the burning sun shone pitilessly. Dripping with sweat and tortured with thirst, these heavily-armed men made their way mile by mile. Almost without warning there would begin violent storms of rain; in a trice tiny brooks would swell to become raging rivers, through which the soldiers had to wade—unless they crossed on bridges hastily improvised by the Indians out of lianas and bark. As food the Spaniards had little more than a few handfuls of maize. Wearing by night-watches, surrounded by myriads of stinging and blood-sucking insects, their clothing torn and their feet wounded by thorns, their eyes bloodshot and their cheeks swollen by mosquito bites, unresting in the daytime and sleepless after dark, they grew more and more fatigued. At the end of the first week, a considerable proportion of them could do no more, and Nuñez de Balboa, who knew that worse was still to come, decreed that the fever-stricken and the exhausted must stay behind. He would push on with the most vigorous of his followers.

Now the ground began to rise, and the jungle, which attained its full tropical luxuriance only in the water-logged low-lying regions, began to grow thinner. Since there was less shade here, the vertical rays of the equatorial sun grilled them in their armour. Slowly and by

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

short stages they managed to climb to the mountain ridge which runs like a spine along the middle of the isthmus. Gradually they began to secure distant views, and at night the air was cooler.

After eighteen days of heroic effort, it seemed that the worst difficulties had been overcome. They were approaching the crest from one of whose summits (according to their Indian guides) they would be able to see both oceans, the familiar Atlantic and the unknown and still unnamed Pacific. But just when the fierce resistance of nature had been successfully overcome, a new enemy appeared: a local chief who, with hundreds of his warriors, tried to bar the strangers' passage. Nuñez de Balboa had had ample experience of skirmishes with the Indians. It was enough for his men to discharge their arquebuses, and the artificial thunder and lightning exerted their well-known magical effect upon the indigenes, who fled in terror, hunted by pursuing Spaniards and the bloodhounds. Instead of being content with congratulating himself upon an easy victory, Balboa, as was the way with the Spanish conquistadors, tarnished his exploit by atrocious cruelty. He would make an example, and would give his men a spectacle which would replace the gladiatorial shows of ancient times. A number of bound and defenceless prisoners were flung to the bloodhounds. This atrocious deed disgraced the last night before Nuñez de Balboa's immortal day.

Unique and inexplicable were the characters of the Spanish conquistadors. More fervent believers than any other Christians before them, they were always ready to make the most earnest appeals to God, and would simultaneously commit the most inhuman deeds ever recorded in history. Capable of the most splendid courage, self-sacrifice, and endurance of suffering, they cheated one another and fought with one another in the

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

most shameless way—and yet, amid all their baseness, they had a highly developed sense of honour, and a wonderful, an admirable awareness of the historical significance of their undertakings. This very Nuñez de Balboa, who the evening before had fed prisoners to his hounds, and who perhaps was this morning ready to fondle the blood-stained chops of the fierce beasts, was fully cognizant of the importance of his enterprise in the history of mankind, and was able, at the decisive moment, to make one of those magnificent gestures which can never be forgotten. He knew that this September 25 would be an ever-memorable day, and, with the emotionalism which was part of the Spanish make-up, this harsh, this ruthless adventurer showed a complete understanding of the timeless importance of his mission.

Here is the story of the crowning phase of Balboa's great achievement. Overnight, just after the blood-bath, one of the natives, pointing to an adjacent elevation, had told him that this was the place from which he would be able to catch a glimpse of the unknown Mar del Sur. He promptly made his dispositions. The wounded and the outwearied among his followers were to stay in the plundered village. The rest—sixty-seven out of the original hundred and ninety—climbed the hill. They were close to the summit at ten in the morning. There was nothing but a bald hill-top still to ascend, and thence a view into the infinite would be secured.

It was now that Balboa ordered his troop to halt. No one was to follow him until he gave the word. To begin with, he would make the climb alone. Alone he would get his first sight of the unknown ocean. Alone he would be the first Spaniard, the first European, the first Christian who, after crossing the Atlantic, the gigantic ocean whose waters lave our own hemisphere, was to set eyes upon the other ocean, the still unknown Pacific. Slowly, with throbbing heart, profoundly realizing the

significance of the moment, he climbed, the furled banner in his left hand, the sword in his right—a lonely silhouette in the mighty prospect. Slowly, unhurryingly, he mounted, for the bulk of the work was over. A few more steps, fewer and ever fewer, and then, when he had reached the summit, the vista was disclosed. Beyond the declining slopes, over the green crowns of the forest trees that lined them, he could at length discern a huge disc which shone like polished metal: the ocean, the new, the unknown sea, of which many had dreamed, but upon which no one had hitherto looked; the legendary ocean which for years Columbus and his successors had vainly sought, the South Sea whose waters washed the coasts of India and China. Vasco Nuñez de Balboa looked and looked and looked, proudly and happily drinking in his certainty that his were the first European eyes to contemplate this endless blue expanse.

Long and ecstatically did the bold adventurer gaze into the distance. Only when he had satisfied the thirst of his eyes did he summon his comrades to share his joy and his pride. Excited, gasping, and shouting, they clambered up the hill, and when they reached the top stood and stared, taking it all in with enthusiastic glances. Suddenly the chaplain of the expedition, Andres de Vara, began to intone the *Te Deum*, and instantly the tumult was stilled, the harsh, rough voices of these soldiers, desperadoes, and bandits uniting in the pious chorus. The Indians looked on in astonishment, while at a word from the priest they cut down a tree to make a cross, which they erected, having carved on it the initials of the king of Spain. There the cross now stood, stretching its two wooden arms as if to embrace the unseen distances of the Atlantic and the Pacific.

The solemn silence was broken by an address from Nuñez de Balboa to his men. They did well to thank God for having vouchsafed them this honour and this

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

grace; they did well to pray Him to continue His aid, that they might conquer this ocean and all the land which bordered it. If they remained as true to their leader as they had hitherto been, they would be the richest of all Spaniards when they returned from these new Indies.

Unfurling the banner, he waved it towards the four winds of heaven, taking possession for Spain of the countries over which these winds blew. Then he summoned the writer, Andres de Valderrabano, whom he instructed to pen a charter recording this solemn act, that the details might be familiar to future ages. Andres de Valderrabano unrolled a parchment, which he had carried with him through the primeval forest in a carefully closed wooden box containing also a goose-quill and a bottle of ink, and, in the document he now indited, he called all the noblemen and the knights and soldiers—*los caballeros y Hidalgos y hombres de bien*—"present on—the occasion of the finding of the Mar del Sur by the sublime and highly honoured Lord and Captain Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, governor of the colony, to bear witness that it was this Lord Vasco Nuñez who was the first to discover the said ocean and to disclose it to his followers."

Thereupon the sixty-seven men went down from the hill-top, having, on this twenty-fifth day of September, 1513, become acquainted with the last of the hitherto unknown oceans.

GOLD AND PEARLS

Certainty had been gained. They had seen the ocean. Now they must get down to the shore, feel the waters, touch them, taste them, and pick up memorials on the strand. The descent occupied two days; and that he might learn the quickest route from the mountains to the sea, Nuñez de Balboa divided his force into several

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

groups. The third of these groups, under Alonzo Martin, was the first to reach the shore. So strongly inspired with the longing for fame were even the private soldiers of this troop of adventurers, so keenly did they thirst for immortality, that the simple Alonzo Martin, a ranker, promptly made the writer record in black upon white that he, Alonzo, had been the first to set his foot and dip his hands in these still unnamed waters. Not until he had secured a grain of immortality for his little ego did he send a message to inform Balboa of his having reached the ocean and plunged his fingers in the water.

Thereupon Balboa made a new impressive gesture. Next day, which was Michaelmas Day, attended by only two-and-twenty companions, he marched down to the strand, armed and girded like St. Michael, to take formal possession of the new ocean. He did not instantly step into the water, but, as its lord and master, proudly waited, resting beneath a tree until the rising tide brought the waves to him, licking his feet like a faithful dog. Then he arose, flung his shield on to his back, where it sparkled in the sun like a mirror, took his sword in one hand and in the other the banner of Castile bearing the image of the Mother of God. Thus equipped, he marched into the water. When he was waist-deep in this great unfamiliar ocean, Nuñez de Balboa, hitherto rebel and desperado, but now triumphing as most loyal servant of his monarch, waved the flag in all directions, crying with a loud voice:

“Long live the High and Mighty Monarchs Ferdinand and Joanna of Castile, Leon, and Aragon, in whose name and for the benefit of the Royal Crown of Castile I hereby take real and bodily and permanent possession of all these seas and lands and coasts and harbours and islands, and I swear that if any other prince or other captain, be he Christian or be he pagan, or of whatsoever creed or estate, should claim any right over these lands and

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

seas, I will defend them in the name of the kings of Castile whose property they are, now and forever more, till the world's end and until the day of the Last Judgment."

All the Spaniards repeated this oath, and for a moment the noise of their words drowned the murmur of the waves. Then each of them moistened his lips with the sea-water, and once more Andres de Valderrabano formally recorded the act of taking possession, closing the document with the words: "These two-and-twenty, in conjunction with the writer Andres de Valderrabano, were the first Christians to set their feet in the South Sea, and all of them tested the water with their hands and moistened their lips with it, to make sure that it was salt like the water of other seas. When they found that this was so, they gave thanks to God."

The great deed had been done. Now had come the time for deriving earthly advantages from the heroic enterprise. By plunder or by barter they secured gold from the indigenes. But a new surprise awaited them in this hour of triumph. The Indians brought them whole handfuls of precious pearls, which were found in abundance in the neighbouring islands. Among them was one known as the "Pellegrina," which was sung by Cervantes and Lope da Vega because it became one of the most noted crown jewels of Spain and England. They filled their pockets with these costly trifles, which here were worth little more than mussel-shells and sand; and when they went on to ask eagerly about what was for them the most important thing in the world, about gold, one of the caciques pointed to the south, to the mountain range which disappeared over the horizon. "There," he said, "is a land full of incredible treasures, where the rulers are served daily out of golden vessels, and where great quadrupeds" (he meant the llamas) "carry costly burdens into the king's treasury." He named this

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

country, which lay southward beyond the mountains. What he said sounded like "Birù," melodious and strange.

Vasco Nuñez de Balboa stared in the direction to which the cacique pointed, where the mountains shimmered on the horizon. This soft-sounding, this alluring word "Birù" sank into his mind. His heart throbbed uneasily. For the second time in his life, tidings of unexpected promise had reached him. The first promise, that of Comagre, concerning the South Sea, had been fulfilled; he had found the shore where pearls abounded, the shore of the Mar del Sur. Perhaps the second promise would likewise be fulfilled; perhaps he was destined to discover, to conquer, the realm of the Incas, the long-sought El Dorado.

RARELY DO THE GODS ALLOW . .

Nuñez de Balboa continued to look longingly into the distance. Like the tones of a golden bell, the word "Birù," "Peru," resounded in his imagination. But, alas, he could not for the moment attempt anything in this direction. With two or three dozen worn-out men it was impossible to conquer an empire. He must get back to Darien, and, having gathered reinforcements, return in search of the new Ophir.

The march home proved no less difficult than the coming had been. Once more the Spaniards had to fight their way through the jungle, once more they had to repulse the onslaught of the natives. It was no longer a bold troop of hardy warriors, but a handful of sick and exhausted men who, after four months of frightful sufferings, reached Darien on January 19, 1514. Balboa himself was near to death, and had to be carried by the Indians in a hammock.

Still, one of the greatest deeds recorded in history had

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

been done. Balboa had fulfilled his promise. Every one of those who ventured with him into the unknown returned a rich man. His soldiers brought back from the coast of the South Sea treasures such as neither Columbus nor any conquistador or colonist had ever won. One-fifth was put aside for the Crown; and no one begrudged it to Balboa when, in dividing the spoils, he claimed a share for his hound Leoncico, who had so valiantly assisted in tearing the unhappy prisoners to pieces. Like any other warrior, Leoncico (which, of course, meant his master) was to receive five hundred gold pesos. After so splendid an achievement, there was no one in the colony to dispute the conquistador's authority as governor. The adventurer and rebel was fêted as if he had been a god, and with pride he could send news to Spain that, on behalf of the Castilian Crown, he had done the greatest deed that had been done since the first voyage of Columbus. The sun of his fortune had dispersed the clouds which had hitherto shadowed his life. Now it shone from the zenith.

But Balboa's good fortune was of brief duration. The population of Darien was greatly astonished a few months later, on a brilliant June day, as they crowded to the shore to watch the sight. A sail had appeared on the horizon, and this was already a wonder in so lost a corner of the world. But see, there was a second sail, a third, a fourth, a fifth; soon there were ten, fifteen, twenty—a whole fleet steering to port. When they had anchored, the news soon spread. All this was the outcome of Nuñez de Balboa's letter. Not of the tidings of his triumph, for these had not reached Spain when the flotilla departed. No, it was the result of his earlier communication, of that in which he reported what he had heard from his friend the cacique about the nearness of the South Sea and of El Dorado, and asked for an army of a thousand men for the conquest of the latter.

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

It was for this expedition that the Spanish Crown had dispatched a powerful armada. Not for a moment, however, did the authorities of Seville and Barcelona dream of entrusting so important a task to the ill-famed adventurer and rebel, Nuñez de Balboa. They sent a wealthy nobleman, a man of high repute, duly accredited as governor, to establish order in the colony. He was sixty years of age. His name was Pedro Arias Davila, usually shortened to Pedrarias. His mission was to execute the king's justice for previous offences, to discover the South Sea, and to conquer El Dorado.

The situation was somewhat awkward. Certainly Pedrarias had been instructed to call Nuñez de Balboa to account for the expulsion of the previous governor, and, should he be proved guilty, to imprison the malefactor or put him to death; but the newcomer had likewise been ordered to discover the South Sea. Yet as soon as he landed he learned that this same Nuñez de Balboa whom he was to try for misconduct had, taking time by the forelock, already done that great deed; that the rebel had secured the triumph which he, Pedrarias, had intended for himself, thus doing the Spanish Crown the greatest service that had been done since the discovery of America. Obviously, then, he could not treat such a man as an ordinary insurgent and send him to the block. Pedrarias must treat Nuñez courteously, must congratulate him upon his great deeds.

All the same, from this moment Balboa's fate was sealed. Never would Pedrarias pardon the rival who had stolen his thunder, who had done the thing which Pedrarias had counted upon as a source of immortal fame. For the moment, indeed, lest he should arouse a revolt among the colonists, Pedrarias had to conceal his hatred of their hero. The inquiry was postponed; a false peace was sworn, for Pedrarias betrothed to Nuñez de Balboa the daughter he had left behind in

Spain. But his hatred and his jealousy, instead of being mitigated, were greatly intensified when there arrived from Spain, on receipt of the news of Balboa's great deed, a decree to the effect that the sometime rebel was to be confirmed in the title he had arrogated to himself. Balboa was jointly appointed adelantado, and Pedrarias was instructed to consult with him upon all important matters.

The colony was too small to hold two governors; one of them would have to be subjugated by the other; one of them must destroy the other. Vasco Nuñez de Balboa realized that the sword of Damocles was hanging over his head, for Pedrarias possessed military authority and was supreme justiciar.

For a second time, therefore, he tried the expedient which had already succeeded so well, he attempted a flight into immortality. He begged permission of Pedrarias to equip an expedition for exploring the coasts of the South Sea, and for effecting further conquests in that region. The veteran rebel's real purpose was, on the southern shore of the isthmus, to make himself independent of Pedrarias's control, to build himself a fleet, to become unchallenged ruler in his own province, and thence, if possible, to conquer Birù, the Ophir of the New World. Pedrarias craftily agreed. If Balboa should perish in the attempt, so much the better. If he should succeed, there might still be means by which the governor could rid himself of this rival whose ambition was so overweening.

Thus Nuñez de Balboa began his second flight into immortality; and his second enterprise was perhaps even more grandly conceived than the first had been, although history, which extols none but the successful, does not account it so highly. On this occasion he crossed the isthmus, not only at the head of a force of soldiers, but taking with him the wood, the planks, the ropes, the

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

sails, the anchors, and the capstans which would be needed for the construction of four brigantines. These materials were carried over the mountains by thousands of Indians. If only he could build a fleet for himself in the South Sea he could make himself supreme upon the neighbouring coasts, could occupy the pearl islands, and could conquer Peru.

This time, however, the fates were adverse, for difficulties were heaped upon difficulties. During the march through the steaming forests, the timber became worm-eaten, the planks crumbled until they were worthless. Not allowing himself to be discouraged, in the Gulf of Panama Balboa had trees cut down and fresh planks sawn. His energy worked miracles. His brigantines, the first in the Pacific Ocean, were built. Then came a tornado, with heavy rains, and a freshet in the river where the ships were lying swept them out to sea, so that they were dashed to pieces on the rocks.

He began over again, and at length two brigantines were ready. He needed but two or three more, and he would be able to set forth upon the conquest of the country which filled his thoughts by day and his dreams by night, as it had done ever since the cacique had pointed southward and uttered the alluring word "Birù." He would send for a few more stout-hearted officers in command of reinforcements, and then he would be able to found his empire.

Had good fortune been added to the courage which he never lacked, within a few months he would have succeeded. Then it would not have been Pizarro whom the world would have acclaimed as the conqueror of Peru, the realm of the Incas, but Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. Even to her favourites, however, Destiny seldom errs by excess of magnanimity. Rarely do the gods allow to mortals more than one immortal deed.

FLIGHT INTO IMMORTALITY

RUIN

With iron energy had Nuñez de Balboa prepared for his great enterprise. But boldness and success intensified the danger, for Pedrarias was keeping suspicious watch upon his subordinate's doings. Perhaps spies had informed him of Balboa's dreams of dominion, or perhaps his own jealousy sufficed to make him fear that the hardy rebel would secure another success. However this may be, he sent a friendly letter to Balboa, whom he invited, before beginning the proposed conquest, to return for a talk to Acla, a town near Darien. Balboa, in the hope of securing reinforcements, promptly accepted the invitation. As he approached the town, there marched out of the gate a little troop of soldiers, apparently to bid him welcome. He hastened towards them to greet their leader, who for several years now had been his brother-in-arms, and had been his companion during the discovery of the South Sea. He was eager to embrace his trusty friend Francisco Pizarro.

But Francisco Pizarro laid a heavy hand on Balboa's shoulder, and declared him under arrest. Pizarro, too, lusted for immortality; Pizarro, too, designed to conquer El Dorado; Pizarro, doubtless, would be glad to have so bold a leader swept out of his path. Governor Pedrarias instituted proceedings on a charge of rebellion, and the trial was rushed through impetuously and unjustly. A few days later, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa and his most faithful adherents were sent to the block. The sword gleamed in the executioner's hands, and in one second as the head rolled on the ground the light was dimmed for ever in the eyes of him who, first of all Europeans, had been able to look simultaneously upon the two greatest oceans that wash the shores of our planet.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD



GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL'S manservant was strangely employed on the afternoon of April 13, 1737, as he sat at the open window on the ground floor of No. 25 Brook Street. To his annoyance he had found that he was out of tobacco. True, he needed no more than step over to Mistress Dolly's a few streets away in order to replenish his store. Yet, because of his master's irascibility, he dared not venture from the house at this particular hour. George Frederick Handel had come home in a terrible fury from rehearsal, red in the face, his temporal arteries distended and throbbing visibly. He had banged the front door behind him, and was now stumping up and down the room overhead, walking so furiously and heavily that the ceiling trembled alarmingly. On such days it was not wise to be lax in duty.

Still, the man felt he must do something to relieve tedium, and so, instead of puffing blue smoke out of his short clay pipe, he amused himself by blowing soap-bubbles from the casement. Having prepared a nice little bowl of soapy water, he launched the bubbles into the street. Passers-by stopped to stare at the show, some chasing the pretty balls with walking-sticks, all laughing and enjoying themselves vastly, but none of them showing the least surprise, for they were used to hearing and seeing strange happenings around the house: a great outburst of music from a harpsichord, shrieks and wails

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

from the throat of a lady singer on days when the choleric German maestro was in one of his berserk rages because the artist had sung a trifle sharp or a little flat. The neighbours living in Grosvenor Square looked upon 25 Brook Street as a lunatic asylum.

The manservant cheerfully continued blowing his iridescent bubbles, becoming more and more deft at their production, launching them with ever-increasing skill into the air until at last one actually floated over to the first storey of a dwelling across the street. Then suddenly his game ceased, and he sprang to his feet. A heavy thud, followed by the sound of broken glass, came from the room upstairs. In a trice the man was on the landing above, and entered his master's study.

A chair Handel habitually used when at work was empty. Indeed, the room itself appeared to be unoccupied, and the servant was about to make for the bedchamber when he caught sight of a body lying motionless on the floor, its eyes fixed and open, while from its mouth came a dull and stertorous rattle. For a moment, fear kept the fellow rooted to the spot. Groans issuing from the palsied lips came jerkily, and grew weaker and weaker in tone. "Is he dying?" the man asked himself as he kneeled down to render what aid he could to his stricken master. He tried to lift the body and bear it to a sofa, but such a feat was beyond his strength single-handed, for Handel was big and corpulent. As he loosened the neckcloth the gurgling abruptly ceased.

Christopher Smith, the composer's amanuensis, who was at work on the storey above, likewise heard the commotion and hastened to the scene of the disaster. The two men raised their heavy burden from the floor, and as they did so the arms dangled loosely from the shoulders. Having made their master as comfortable as possible and propped up the lolling head, Smith turned to the servant, saying, "Better undress him while I run

for a doctor. Sprinkle his face with water until he comes to."

Not stopping to put on a coat, Christopher Smith hurried along Brook Street and made his way towards Bond Street, hailing every hackney-carriage that passed at a slow trot. But none of the drivers took the slightest notice of the podgy, breathless man racing along in his shirt-sleeves. At last my Lord Chandos's coach came rolling by. The occupant recognized Smith, who, forgetting every law of etiquette, wrenched open the carriage door. "Handel is dying!" he cried unceremoniously to the duke, who was a music-lover and the most generous patron of his beloved master; "I must fetch a doctor." "Jump in!" said His Grace, shouting an order to the coachman. The horses were whipped up, and Dr. Jenkins was dragged from his rooms in Fleet Street where he was engaged on a peculiarly important urinalysis. He and Smith leapt into the doctor's gig and drove swiftly back to Brook Street. On the way, George Frederick Handel's familiar explained, "They've worried him to death. He was so vexed, so furious with those damned singers, women and castrati, and those quill-drivers, criticasters, and what not. . . . Think of it! No fewer than four operas has he composed this last twelve months, hoping thereby to save the theatre from perdition. . . . But it's no good; everyone's against him, especially the Italians—and at their head Senusino, who is nothing better than a bellowing monkey. Ah, you cannot know what they've made our Handel suffer. All his savings have been swallowed up in these ventures; ten thousand pounds! And now—creditors are dunning him to death. Never before has a man worked more gloriously; never before has a man given himself to a task more forgetful of self. But they are determined to break our giant. Ah, what a man! Ah, what a genius!"

Dr. Jenkins listened to the diatribe, cool and collected.

Before pulling up at No. 25, he inquired, "How old is he?"

"Fifty-two," answered Christopher Smith.

"A ticklish age . . . He's worked like an ox—but then, he's as strong as an ox. Well, it remains to be seen what can be done in his case."

The manservant held a basin, Christopher Smith lifted Handel's arm, the doctor made an incision for the necessary blood-letting. As soon as the blood had spurted forth, a sigh of relief came from the flaccid mouth. Handel drew a deep breath, and opened his eyes. Their expression was unconscious, weary and far away; their light was extinguished, and they looked glazed.

Dr. Jenkins bandaged the arm. Nothing much could be done for the moment. As he was about to rise to his feet, he noticed that his patient's lips were beginning to move. He leaned forward to catch the halting words:

"I'm finished—no strength—don't want—live—without strength——" Bending lower to get a closer view Dr. Jenkins perceived that while one eye stared sightless into the void, the other was conscious of its surroundings. As a test, he raised the right arm of the stricken man. When he let go, it dropped lifeless. Then he tried the left. This remained in the position wherein he placed it. Dr. Jenkins was no longer at a loss for a diagnosis. Smith followed him from the room and asked anxiously: "What's the matter with him?"

"Apoplexy. Right side paralysed."

"And is he—" Christopher Smith hesitated for a moment, then said, "is he likely to recover?"

Dr. Jenkins took a pinch of snuff. He did not care to be catechized in this forthright way.

"Maybe," he answered dubiously. "Anything is possible."

"Will he remain paralysed?"

"Perhaps—unless a miracle happens."

But Christopher Smith, who was devoted to his master with every fibre of his being, was not satisfied by so ambiguous a declaration. "Please, please, tell me if he will be able to work again. He cannot live unless he composes. . . ."

"I'm afraid not. We may save the man—but the musician is lost for ever. It seems to me that his brain has been permanently injured." Christopher Smith stared before him nonplussed. Such a look of despair came into his eyes that the physician was touched. "As I said before," he added consolingly, "one can never tell. A miracle may happen. True, I've never seen such a one—but . . ."

During four long months George Frederick Handel remained as weak as a kitten. Yet strength was his very life. The right side of his body was as if dead. He could neither walk, nor write, nor force his right hand to sound one of the keys of the harpsichord. He could utter no word; his lips were flaccid; a few syllables came falling from his mouth. When his friends made music for him, his glance would light up, and his poor heavy frame, as in a dream, tried to sway rhythmically to the measure; but his limbs were as petrified as if they were frozen; horror invaded his eyes. The muscles no longer obeyed the nerves, and the giant felt himself walled up in an invisible tomb. When the music ceased, his lids closed and his face looked once more like that of a corpse. As a final and desperate remedy, the doctor ordered his patient to take the hot baths at Aix-la-Chapelle. These waters might possibly bring some amelioration. But just as under the frigid earth there boiled and bubbled the strange hot springs of Aix, so within the petrified body of the great musician there stirred a mysterious force:

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Handel's will, the primitive urge of his being. This had not been touched by the stroke, and the undying fire refused to be quenched under the load of the finite body. The giant had never yet been conquered; he wanted to live; he desired to create; and so mighty was this desire that it brought about a miracle which ran counter to all the laws of nature. The specialist at Aix warned him against staying longer than three hours in the hot baths, saying that his heart could not stand the strain, and that such excess of zeal might kill him. But Handel's will to live challenged death to the combat for that which he most ardently desired: health. To the dismay of his doctors, he remained nine hours at a stretch in the hot bath, and his determination, his will, brought him strength. A week after his arrival in Aix he was able to walk; another week, and he could raise his arm. What a triumph of will over caution! Handel dragged himself from the palsy of death and grasped at life with enhanced ardour, with the glowing enthusiasm of a sick man who knows that health is to be his once more.

On the day he was to leave Aix, now again master of his life, Handel halted before the cathedral. He had never been much of a religious man, yet, with the new surge of vitality within him, he felt moved by an irresistible force. There stood the huge organ. He touched the keys with his left hand. Clear and sweet were the sounds that issued from the pipes, spreading and echoing through the vaulted shrine. Now he hesitatingly made an essay with the fingers of his right hand, which had for so long been useless. And lo, as they fell upon the board, silvery notes were wafted into the air. Slowly, he set himself to improvise; and gradually the fire of inspiration invaded his being. Glorious chords rose and fell, filling nave and aisles with a clarity of sound which the nuns and other pious persons at their devotions below had never heard on earth before. Handel, his head

bowed in all humility, played and played. He had again found his method of expression, the language in which he conversed with God, with his fellow-mortals, and with eternity. Once again he could compose music. At last he felt that in very truth he was cured.

“I have come back from Hades,” he declared proudly as he threw a mighty chest and stretched his no less mighty arms. George Frederick Handel said this to his English physician, who marvelled at the medical wonder produced in his patient. Henceforward, with his erstwhile fury and energy Handel urged himself into his work of composition. He was now fifty-three years of age, but there was no diminution in his keen and alert enthusiasm for work. He wrote an opera—how willingly his hand obeyed his behest! There followed a second, a third, a fourth; then the great *Saul*, *Israel in Egypt*, and *Alexander's Feast*. It was as if a boring had been made, and a spring, long pent-up, had been let loose. Nevertheless, fate was against him. Queen Caroline, his admiring patron, died; his pension stopped; then came the Spanish wars. Crowds assembled in the public squares and market-places, but the playhouses were empty. Debts mounted up. A merciless winter followed. So cold was it in London that the Thames froze and skaters disported themselves on its surface. Houses of entertainment were closed, for there was no means of heating them, and people were not inclined to hear even the most heavenly music in so frosted an enclosure. Singers went hoarse, and could no longer pipe up: engagements were cancelled. Handel's situation became desperate. Creditors pressed him on every side; musical critics sneered; the public remained cold and indifferent. But in spite of his manifold troubles, he did not lose courage. He gave a benefit performance, though to do so went against the grain. This saved him for the moment,

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

though it made him more reserved and dour. In 1740 he felt that he was a conquered and smitten man. From earlier works he extracted titbits here and there to create insignificant novelties. The mighty stream of inspiration seeped away into the sands; his refreshed and reinvigorated body wilted likewise. Handel was tired for the first time in his life; the giant was conquered; the splendid fighter had met his match. The stream of creative activity, the holy stream, had dried up; the stream which, for half a century, had fecundated the earth. Well, this was the end; yes, this was the end; so said the Master in his despondency. "Why did God permit my resurrection, only to allow my fellow-men to bury me again? Why did He vouchsafe me a renewal of life, if I may no longer be permitted to create? Far better were it for me to have died than to have become the shadow of my former self, to live in the dreary cold and drag along in the void."

In his wrath he murmured the words of the Crucified: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

A lost soul, a man whose heart was filled with despair, who was weary of himself, who no longer believed in his own energy of creation, whose faith in God had, perhaps, lapsed—such was Handel during those dreary months as he wandered about the streets of London. He did not dare to reach home until far into the night, for he knew that many creditors would be waiting on his doorstep. As he rambled along, he felt that the passers-by glanced at him indifferently or scornfully. At times he wondered whether it would not be better for him to abscond to Ireland, in which country his fame as composer and musician was as fresh as ever it had been. The Irish little knew how broken he was. Or perhaps Germany might be a more suitable refuge? Or Italy? Might not the frost undergo a thaw in those lands? With a warm

wind from the south, the frozen melodies that lay congealed in his barren heart might spring forth, and . . . But no! Handel was revolted by the thought of fleeing from London, a defeated man. It was no less intolerable to him to be incapable of creating and of labouring. At times he stood motionless before a church, thinking to enter the fane; but he knew too well that words would bring no comfort to his tortured soul. Another day his feet led him to a tavern; yet a man who has experienced the intoxication of spiritual creation can find no inspiration amid the fumes of alcoholic liquors. The bridges crossing the Thames allured him, and as he gazed into the dark and sluggish waters he wondered whether one plunge into their muddy depths would not be the most suitable exit. The burden of loneliness, the feeling that he was forsaken by God and man alike, were intolerable. On August 21, 1741, he started on one of those interminable walks. The day was hot as molten metal, and the burning cup of the sky arched over a breathless London. Not until nightfall had Handel issued forth, hoping to find a little freshness amid the trees in Green Park. He was tired, oh so tired, as he flopped on to a seat amid the shadows; tired of talking, tired of writing, tired of playing music, tired of thinking, tired of feeling, tired of life itself. Indeed, why and for what was he alive? Staggering like a drunkard he dragged his weary carcass across Piccadilly and through Dover Street. One thought obsessed his mind: sleep, sleep, oblivion, rest: to sleep and be at rest for ever. When he reached the house in Brook Street everyone had gone to bed, all were asleep. Slowly—oh, how weary he felt; men had hunted him down until he had no strength in him—very slowly, he climbed the stair; at each step the ancient boards creaked. At last he found himself in his study. Mechanically, as for so many years he had done, he lighted the candles at his work-table. In the old days there had invariably been some

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

task to finish. He had always come back from his walks abroad with a melody, a theme, that required elaboration. But this night there was nothing; the mills of fantasy had ceased working; the stream was frozen and still. There was nothing to begin or to finish. Handel was faced by emptiness. Yet no! What might that white paper parcel be, set so carefully in the middle of the table? He picked up the packet and felt it delicately with his finger-tips. Then he broke the seals. A letter, with a bulky manuscript. A letter from Charles Jennens, the poet who had written the libretto of *Saul* and of *Israel in Egypt*. He informed Handel that he was sending a new text, and hoped that the *phoenix musicae*, the greatest genius in the realm of music, would deign to accept the lumbering words and speed them forth on the wings of his undying melodies.

Handel dropped the missive as though it were some loathsome reptile. Was Jennens laughing at him? A mean thing to scoff at a dying man, stricken as he was with paralysis! The musician, in his despair, tore the letter to shreds, threw these on the floor, and stamped upon them viciously. "Mean beast!" he exclaimed in his rage. The man had turned the blade in his sorest wound; his heart was bitter within him. Fretfully he extinguished the candles and groped his way into his bedroom. Throwing himself on to the bed, he burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping. This world was indeed a wretched place, a blighted planet, scorning and plaguing those who suffered and were poor. Why should Jennens have applied to him, whose heart was dead? Why try and force him to work when his mind was petrified and wholly lacking in the energy of inspiration? If only sleep would come to blot these miseries out, sleep, animal sleep; to forget, and then cease to be! Annihilated and lost, Handel lay upon his bed. But sleep would not come. His eyelids refused to close. A storm was

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

raging within him; he was restless, disturbed by an evil and mysterious unrest. He tossed and turned, now on his right side, now on his left, becoming more and more wakeful as hour followed hour. Should he get up and cast an eye over the text? No! What would be the use? He was nothing better than a corpse. Comfort was not for such as he. . . . God had forsaken him! He had been cut off from the stream of life. . . . And yet something of his innate energy spurred him on; a strange curiosity encompassed him, forcing him, in spite of his gloom, to rise, to go back to his work-table, to re-light the candles there, though his hands trembled. Was another miracle about to be performed? Was his mind to be relieved of its paralysis as his body had been freed from the inertia following upon that stroke? Perhaps God would deign to give him healing and comfort for the soul. . . .

Handel pushed the sheets of manuscript nearer the light. On the first page he read the word "Messiah." Another oratorio! All his latest achievements in this medium had been failures. With feverish hands he turned the title-page and began to read.

The first words arrested his attention. "Comfort ye." A marvellous beginning; but not merely that, the words were an answer, an angelic summons to his weary heart. "Comfort ye!" The syllables re-echoed in Handel's mind, stimulating him, assuaging his anguish. Hardly had he read them than they began to translate themselves into a musical idiom, swelling, calling, singing forth into the ether. The portals had been thrown wide. Oh joy! Handel heard musical tones once more after the long drought, and dearth of inspiration.

With trembling fingers he turned the pages of the libretto. Something summoned him, called to him; every word seemed to seize him with overwhelming power. "Thus saith the Lord." Was this not addressed

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

to him personally, and to him alone? The fist which had smitten him was now opened. A heavenly hand was raising him from the earth. . . . "And He shall purify." Truly such was happening here and now with him, for grief and gloom were scurrying from his heart, and light was penetrating within, crystal clear and pure, without alloy. Who else could have put such sublime words into poor old Jennens's head, who else but He who knew the need of an unhappy creature? Certainly the pen of the insignificant poetaster in Gopsall could never be spontaneously inspired. "That they may offer unto the Lord." Yes, kindle the sacrificial flame within an ardent heart, a flame which would leap heavenward, and would receive an answer to so wonderful a call. To him alone had come the summons to lift up his voice with strength; ay, to cry out with the full blast of tubas, of mighty choirs, of thundering chords on the organ, so that, as on the first day of creation, the Word, the Logos, might awaken men, might rouse all those who still "walked in darkness." "Behold, darkness shall cover the earth!" Humanity did not yet know the blessedness of the salvation which was beginning to shine down in this very hour. Hardly was Handel aware that he had read the words, when a perfect melody formed itself around: "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God." Thus to sing His praise, to glorify Him who had brought peace to many a stricken heart. "The angel of the Lord came upon them." With shining pinions he had entered this room, had touched the sufferer and brought release. How could mortal lips remain silent after such a visitation, how not rejoice and lift up heart and voice in jubilant song? "Glory to God!" Handel bowed his head over the sheets of paper before him. All sense of weariness disappeared. Never before had he felt so strong, or been so fully conscious of the fecund torrent of creative force within him. He was, as it were, bathed

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

in the warm and soothing rush of the words, words which penetrated to his inmost being, bringing him a sense of liberation. "Rejoice!" The word rose and drummed on his ears. In spite of himself, he raised his head and spread wide his arms. "He shall give you rest." The composer resolved to prove this as it had never been proved before upon earth, to bear witness to its truth, to hold it aloft so that its radiance might illumine the world. One who has suffered much is alone capable of rejoicing; only he who has greatly travailed can realize the ultimate benediction granted by the All-good. It is, therefore, his mission to testify before men how suffering has uplifted him. When Handel came to the phrase "He was despised," the words struck home; memories of recent distress surged up. The world had looked upon him as vanquished, it had already buried his living body, it had scorned him. "All they that see Him laugh" and "He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort Him." Nevertheless, "He trusted in God" and "God did not leave His soul in Hell." No, God had not left his soul in the hell of hopeless impotence, but had summoned him forth to action so that he might bring tidings of great joy to his fellow-mortals. "Lift up your heads," he read. How commanding were the tones: an annunciation, in very deed! Then, suddenly, Handel felt nonplussed, for he read in poor old Jennens's handwriting the sentence, "The Lord gave the Word."

Handel held his breath. Truth had issued from the pen of an indifferently gifted man. Surely the Lord Himself had inspired this second-rate poet? "The Lord gave the Word" . . . divine mercy had rained down from on high. The stream must flow back to the Godhead; all the cordial emanations from the human heart must be turned into songs of praise. The notes must catch up the words and toss them far and wide on lilt and

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

melodies and ineffable harmonies, so that the joy of life might become an embodiment as great as the Godhead itself, so that the word which was but mortal and is doomed to die might be converted by sheer beauty and fervour of spirit into imperishable sound. Again and again must the liberating and jocund syllables be repeated. "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" for all eternity. The voices of mankind must be brought together in order to join in so mighty a chorus; high voices and low, the unflinching tones of men mingling with the softer tones of women; like a Jacob's ladder of sound, the notes must rise and fall; sweet notes from fiddles merging into the rougher notes from the brass, the whole sustained by the powerful undertone of the organ. "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" Yes, thought the Master, out of this single word must be created a song of joy so formidable that it would reach the throne of the Creator of all things.

Tears flooded Handel's eyes as the fires of inspiration invaded him. There remained a few more pages to look at: the third part of the oratorio. But the composer's strength seemed to have ebbed out of him with that mighty exclamation of "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" The melodies those words had inspired swelled, and filled his whole being, burning like liquid fire, flowing into him and flowing out of him again unendingly. The phrases pressed upon him, so that his frame felt too small to contain them; they wanted to escape and storm the heavens with their melodious roar. Handel took up his pen and jotted down notes; quicker and quicker the queer little signs began to cover the paper. He could hardly contain himself with excitement. Like a ship whose sails are filled with a stiff breeze, Handel was carried forward on his musical voyage. The night was calm and silent around him; darkness and peace lay as a pall over the huge city. But light flooded his own soul,

and (though the sounds were unheard by others) the study was alive with the music of the All.

When the manservant cautiously entered the room next morning he found Handel still at work. Nor did the master answer Christopher Smith's greeting and his inquiry as to whether there was any copying to be done. Handel's only response was an ominous growl. Nobody ventured henceforward to disturb him. For three weeks he persisted; and when his food was brought, he merely crumbled a piece of bread with his left hand while continuing to scribble with his right. He was as if intoxicated. When he marched up and down the room, beating time with his hand and singing at the top of his voice, his eyes looked distraught; if someone addressed him he started, and his answers were vague and disconnected. During these days the domestic was hard put to it to keep his temper. Creditors presented themselves, singers came begging the maestro to produce some cantata or other which might show off their particular talents, Handel was invited to give a concert at Court. All these people had to be placated and sent away hopeful and happy, for if the man ventured to ask his master he was encountered with leonine fury and flashing eyes. Time and space during these feverish weeks were obliterated so far as Handel was concerned; day and night he kept hard at his job, living wholly in the realm where rhythm and tone reigned supreme. As the work neared an end, he was increasingly inspired, increasingly tortured by the fury of inspiration. He had become a captive of himself, a prisoner within the four walls of his study; he strummed on the harpsichord, he sang; then, sitting at his work-table, he worked and worked, until his fingers gave out. Never had he experienced such a frenzy of creation, never before had he so lived and fought with music.

At last, in three weeks—an unprecedented marvel in

the world of music—the great work was finished. It was now September 14. Words had been transformed into sound: imperishable sound had issued from dry vocables. A miracle of human will had been performed. Notes had been written down, melody and its accompanying harmonies had been created. One word alone remained to receive inspiration: the final "Amen." But these two abrupt and short syllables were to be built into a monument which would reach to the skies. One voice tossed it to another; the syllables became long and protracted, to be re-knit again, and then rent apart; more glowing. Like God's breath, Handel's inspiration resounded in the concluding word of the sublime prayer, which thus became as wide and as manifold as the universe. The composer could not have enough of the word, dwelling upon the first vowel so that (the organ sustaining the chorus) it could fill, not only a cathedral, but the very dome of the sky. One fancies that the angels have joined in the psalm, and that we hear their voices ringing among the rafters of heaven. Here only it is that the echoes of his everlasting "Amen, Amen, Amen!" die away. . . . At last Handel rose to his feet. The pen slipped from his hand. He hardly knew where he was. He neither saw nor heard any more. He felt only tiredness—immeasurable tiredness, and such reeling giddiness had his labour induced in him that he had to hold to the wall for support. His exertions had made him exhausted in body and confused in mind. Like a blind man, clinging to the walls, he stumbled towards his bedroom. All the strength had oozed away from his weary frame, and his senses were confused and blurred. Stumblingly he reached his couch. Here he fell forward, his strained eyes closed, and he slept.

The manservant came thrice in the course of the morning tiptoeing to the door, opening it without making a sound. His master still slept; like a piece of white

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

sculpture the weary face lay among the pillows, rigid and motionless. The servant coughed discreetly and knocked gently. But no sound penetrated the wall of slumber that guarded the exhausted musician. In the afternoon Christopher Smith came; but no movement of his could rouse Handel from a sleep of such profound exhaustion. The amanuensis leaned over the recumbent figure, which might almost have been the corpse of a hero slain on the battlefield. The composer was absolutely prostrated after his incredible efforts. But Christopher Smith and the manservant, who guessed nothing of the struggle and the victory, were seized with alarm lest their master should have had another stroke. What else could account for his prolonged immobility? When, towards evening, attempts to awaken Handel were still fruitless, when he had been lying insensible for seventeen hours, Smith went for the doctor. But the physician was not at home, for Dr. Jenkins, thinking his day's work done, had turned a mild evening to good account and gone fishing on the bank of the Thames. He was not particularly pleased at being recalled to professional harness, but when he heard that it was Handel who was in need of his services, he gathered his fishing-tackle together and went home to fetch the requisites for the blood-letting which would most probably be needed. At length the gig containing the two men drove back to Brook Street.

The manservant already stood at the door awaiting their arrival and waving at them with both arms. "The master is up," he shouted from across the street, "and with a tremendous appetite! He has eaten half a ham, drunk four pints of beer, and is still clamouring for more."

They found Handel sitting in fine fettle at the groaning board. Just as he had slept the clock round and more to make up for the sleeplessness of three weeks, so was he now eating like a Gargantua as if to restore, in one huge

meal, all the energy he had expended during a long spell of creative activity. The instant he caught sight of the physician he began to laugh uproariously, peal after peal of prodigious, ringing laughter. Smith remembered then that during those weeks when Handel had been engaged on his great task, no laughter had touched the composer's stern mouth. His expression had been one almost of anger, combined with the tension of great exertion. Now his stored-up laughter burst forth like a wave against a rocky crag, it foamed and frothed and overflowed, and at last receded. Never before in his life had Handel laughed so unrestrainedly as now at the sight of the doctor, when he knew himself perfectly well, and the joy of his life rioted frenziedly in him. Still laughing, he raised his tankard and shook it at the soberly clad medico in salutation.

"May the Devil fly away with me," exclaimed Dr. Jenkins. "What's got you, man? Has someone given you an elixir? You are positively bursting with vitality." Handel continued to laugh, with sparkling eyes. Then, growing serious at last, he slowly rose to his feet and strode to the harpsichord. At first his hands moved soundlessly over the keys. Half turning, he smiled enigmatically, and began as if in jest to intone the recitative, "Behold! I tell you a mystery." Now his fingers ran away with him. Forgetting self and auditors, he became immersed in creation. He sang as he played the concluding chorus. Hitherto he had heard it as if in a dream, a composer's dream, but now he was fully conscious. "O Death, where is thy sting?" Yes, where was the sting of Death? The question filled his mind now that the fire and ardour of life were renewed. Lost in the magnificence of his music, he imagined himself to be the chorus. Stronger rose the words, louder and more fully swelled the organ. The room seemed almost to burst with sound. Jubilantly, triumphantly, he sang

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

and played on and on, until he reached the final "Amen! Amen! Amen!"

Dr. Jenkins looked on bemused. When Handel had finished he muttered: "Never have I heard the like of this. You're possessed of the Devil, you know."

A cloud obscured Handel's face. He, too, was alarmed at the scope of the work, and the wonder that he had wrought as if in sleep. Humility overpowered him. With hanging head he whispered so that the others could barely hear the words: "I think, rather, that God has visited me."

A few months later two gentlemen called at the lodging-house in Abbey Street, Dublin, where Handel, the great composer from London, had taken up his quarters. Respectfully they made a request. Handel, they said, had been for some time delighting the Irish capital with work of exquisite beauty such as had not been heard in the city before. Now they were told that the first performance of his new oratorio *Messiah* was soon to take place in Dublin. The musical public of Ireland was looking forward to it with keen expectation, regarding it as a great honour that Dublin was to be given preference over London in this respect. Receipts would be correspondingly large. What the visitors wished to know was whether the maestro, whose generosity was famous, would devote the profits of the first night's performance to certain charities in which they were interested.

Handel grinned in friendly fashion. He reciprocated Dublin's affection and his heart was touched. "Probably I shall be delighted to comply; but first you must let me know what are the charities in question."

"Providing comforts for prisoners in various prisons," answered one of the pair, a kindly man with snowy locks. "And for the patients in Mercier's Hospital," added the

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

other. But of course, they added, they were only asking the composer to make this magnificent gift of the profits of the first night. Naturally all the rest remained with the Master.

Handel shook his head. "No," he said gently, "I do not want to make money out of this work, for which I am indebted to another. Always the receipts must be devoted to prisoners, orphans, and the sick. I have myself been a very sick man, and am now cured. I was a prisoner, and have been set free." The callers failed to understand his words, but they expressed their gratitude in appropriate terms, and departed to spread the glad tidings through the city.

The last rehearsal took place on April 7, 1742. No more than a few relatives of the chorus singers from the two cathedrals had been admitted to the hall in Fishamble Street, which, for reasons of economy, was but dimly lighted, and this sparse audience stood scattered in silent groups to listen to the new opus by the great London composer. The big place was gloomy and cold and still, but when the choruses burst forth into song the effect upon the hearers was instantaneous and remarkable. Involuntarily, the groups of auditors drew together into a compact mass, as if to support one another, for to each individual person it seemed as if the mighty current of this amazing and unprecedented music would sweep him away were he to remain isolated. They thronged together more and more closely, as though to listen with one heart. A congregation united in piety seemed to be receiving the message of confidence which, continually rephrased, encompassed them in a sea of magnificent sound. Each of them felt a weakling in the presence of such elemental strength, but at the same time felt happily sustained by it, so that a thrill of delight passed through them all as though they possessed only one body. When

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

the first Hallelujah sounded, they were universally uplifted. Feeling that they could no longer remain close to earth, they rose to their feet and lifted up their reverent voices Godward from that greater elevation. When the rehearsal was over and all had departed, they told everyone that they had been listening to a composition such as had never before been heard in the world. The whole town waited with growing impatience to hear this masterpiece.

Six days later, on the evening of April 13, crowds were waiting for the doors to open. Ladies had come in narrow skirts, gentlemen had left their swords at home, that there might be room for a larger audience. Seven hundred persons, an unprecedented number, packed the hall—so quickly had rumour spread the fame of the work that was about to be performed. Breathless silence; the oratorio opened. Then there came a tremor as the choruses began with a hurricane of energy. Handel stood close by the organ in a dream. His work had become remote from the personality of its composer, who was now carried away as by an alien current. When the final Amen resounded he joined in the chorus, singing as he had never sung before, congratulating himself, while thanking God for this oratorio which the Almighty had bestowed on him to satisfy his inmost need; grateful for this flame which had been kindled out of his own self. Then, when the storms of applause began, he slipped away, not wishing to return thanks to those who were thanking him, for he felt that his thanksgiving was due to the Divine Grace which had vouchsafed him this boon.

The dams had burst, and the stream flowed on gaily henceforward year after year. Nothing could stop Handel's progress, or was capable of checking the surge of his resuscitated existence. Yet again an operatic com-

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

pany in London was reconstructed, only once more to prove a failure: duns continued to pester him. Nevertheless, the sexagenarian was now firmly planted on his feet and marched steadfastly past the milestones in his career, overcoming obstacle after obstacle. Age sapped his vitality; his arms were partially paralysed and he was tormented by gout: but his indefatigable spirit soared above all these temporal troubles. He finished composition after composition. At length his eyesight failed, and he went blind while at work on *Jephtha*. However, even as Beethoven continued to write music after he had become completely deaf, so did Handel triumph over blindness while bowing more reverently before God in proportion as his earthly victories brought increasing glory.

Like all great artists, he was very critical of his own works. None the less, he loved *Messiah*, being thankful to it as the saviour who had rescued him from an abyss. Year after year it was produced in London; always he devoted the proceeds to hospitals, more especially to the Foundling Hospital. The man who had recovered from sickness wished to help ailing folk, and orphans, the disenfranchised, and to liberate those who lay in chains. Finally, he was to bid farewell to life during a performance of this masterpiece which had dragged him out of Tophet. On April 6, 1759, a broken man of seventy-four, he drove to the concert hall. He stood among those who loved him, instrumentalists and singers whom he could no longer see. But as the waves of sound assailed his ears, as he was stimulated by the joyful vociferations of the chorus, his weary features lighted up one last time. He waved his arms in time with the music, joining in the singing as fervently as if he were officiating at his own requiem and was joining in the prayers for his own salvation and the universal redemption of mankind. At the words "The trumpet shall sound" his face twitched,

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

while his sightless orbs were directed upwards as though he were already standing before the mercy seat. Then, feeling faint, he staggered and nearly fell. He knew that he had done his work faithfully, and that he need have no fear of God's Last Judgment.

His friends were very greatly concerned as they helped the veteran to reach his home. They felt that Handel's appearance at this performance was a final adieu. When they got him safely to bed, he murmured: "I should like to die on Good Friday." The physicians in attendance were puzzled, for though they knew that next Good Friday would be April 13, they failed to remember that April 13 had been the day upon which, long years before, fate had struck him down; the day on which, with *Messiah*, his temporal resurrection had been fully accomplished, when for the first time his wonderful work had been publicly performed in Dublin. That was the date on which he would fain pass away, in the full benefit of eternal resurrection.

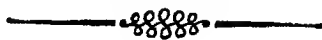
The man's indomitable will had power over death as well as over life. By April 13 his vital energies flagged. He could not see, nor hear, nor feel. His huge frame, like a deserted house, lay inert. Just as when you put an empty shell to your ear you hear the murmur of distant seas, so to his inner senses came the sound of far-away music unheard by others—music stranger and more splendid than he had ever wrought in imagination. Slowly the strains of this mighty singing freed his soul from the outworn body, lifting it to regions where it could share in the music of the spheres. Next day, before the Easter bells began to ring, there perished all that was mortal of George Frederick Handel.

1685

G. F. H.

1759

THE GENIUS OF ONE NIGHT



FOR three months, in 1792, the French National Assembly had been vacillating between war and peace. Should France fight the coalition of the Emperors and the Kings, or remain passive? Louis XVI was undecided. He foresaw the danger of the revolutionists' victory; but he also foresaw the danger of their defeat. The parties, too, were divided. The Girondists were in favour of war, which, they thought, would help them to retain power. Robespierre and the Jacobins were in favour of peace, hoping thus to gain supreme power. From day to day the situation grew tenser. The journals were vociferous; the clubs were disputing; more and more fantastic grew the rumours which excited the public. A decision of any kind would be a relief, and consequently there was general satisfaction when, on April 20, the King of France at length declared war against the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia.

The tension throughout those weeks in Paris had been electric, burdensome, and painful; but it had been even worse, even more threatening, in the frontier regions. Troops were under canvas all along the border. In every village, in every town, volunteers were being enrolled and National Guards equipped. Everywhere the fortresses were being made ready for defence. In Alsace, especially, it was generally known that here, as always, the struggle between France and Germany would begin, the first decision would be effected. The enemy was gathering

his forces on the other bank of the Rhine. There the adversary was not, as in Paris, a hazy, rhetorical concept, but a visible and tangible reality. From the fortified bridge-head and from the tower of the cathedral could be seen with the naked eye the assembling regiments of the Prussians. During the quiet hours of the night it was easy to hear the rumble of artillery wagons, the clash of arms, the signalling of trumpets—sounds which crossed the quiet waters of the indifferent river glittering in the moonlight. Everyone knew that only a word, only a decree, was needed, and from the now silent mouths of the Prussian cannon would come thunder and lightning to renew the age-long war between Germany and France—this time in the name of the new liberty on one side, and in the name of the old order on the other.

It was a fateful day, therefore, when, on April 25, 1792, messengers brought from Paris to Strasbourg news of the declaration of war. From all the streets and all the houses the populace flocked to the squares; the garrison, eager for war, paraded regiment by regiment. In the great square stood Dietrich, the mayor, wearing his official sash and a red cockade in his hat, which he waved in greeting to the soldiers. Trumpet blasts and the roll of drums demanded quiet. When this had been secured, Dietrich, alternately in French and in German, read the declaration of war. As he concluded, the regimental bands began to play the first war-song of the Revolution, the *Ça ira* (soon to be superseded)—a stimulating, arrogant, mocking dance-air, to which the thundering tread of the regiments as they marched past gave a martial clang. Then the crowd of spectators broke up, to carry the exciting news back to the streets and the houses. In the cafés and in the clubs lively conversations were held and proclamations were read. “Aux armes, citoyens! L’étendard de la guerre est déployé! Le signal est donné!” With such adjurations they universally

began. Everywhere, in all the speeches, in all the newspapers, in all the posters, and from all lips, came such vigorous and rhythmic appeals as: "Aux armes, citoyens! Qu'ils tremblent donc, ces despotes couronnés! Marchons, enfants de la liberté!" Again and again, on hearing these fiery words, the crowds shouted acclamations. Always, in the streets and the squares, crowds shout vociferously on hearing a declaration of war, but at such moments, with the general acclamations there mingle softer asides. Anxiety and alarm awaken whenever war is declared, but these feelings are whispered inconspicuously and with pallid lips. Always there have been mothers who have said to themselves, "Will not the foreign soldiers murder my children?" In every country the peasants have been fearful for their possessions—their fields, their cottages, their cattle, and their crops. Will not their seed be crushed by heavy feet? Will not their houses be plundered by brutal hordes? Will not their fields be manured with human blood?

The mayor of Strasbourg, Friedrich Baron Dietrich—an aristocrat who, like the other progressive aristocrats of France in those days, had whole-heartedly espoused the cause of the new liberty—would not allow any but the loud, the jubilant, the confident voices to find expression. Of set purpose he made the day of the declaration of war a day of public rejoicing, a feast-day. He hurried from one meeting to another, stimulating popular enthusiasm; he had wine and provisions distributed among the soldiers who were departing for the front; and that evening, in his roomy house on the Place de Broglie, he entertained civilians, officers, and important officials at a farewell gathering, to which the enthusiasm of the partakers gave, prematurely, the character of a festival of victory.

The generals, since, after the manner of generals, they were confident that success awaited them, took the lead-

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

ing place; while the junior officers, to whom the war seemed to give life its meaning, talked at large. One stimulated another. They brandished their swords; they embraced; they drank one another's health; and, as the good wine circulated more freely, the speeches grew more passionate. Once again were heard the enheartening words of the newspapers and the proclamations: "To arms, citizens! Let us march! Let us save our country! Soon they will tremble, the crowned despots! Now, when the banner of victory has been unfurled, the day has come to make the 'Tricolor wave all over the world! Let each man do his utmost for the king, for the flag, and for liberty!" At such moments, the whole people, the whole country, is united by its faith in victory and by its enthusiasm on behalf of the cause of freedom.

Amid the speeches and the toasts, Mayor Dietrich turned to a young captain of engineers named Rouget, who was sitting beside him. He had remembered that this smart, not particularly handsome, but very agreeable officer had, six months before, when the constitution had been proclaimed, written a really fine Ode to Liberty, which Pleyel, the regimental bandmaster, had set to music. The unpretentious work had caught on; the military band had learned it; it had been played in the great square and had been sung in chorus. Were not the declaration of war and the departure of the troops good reasons for producing another work of the kind? Unceremoniously, as one begs a favour of a friend, Dietrich asked Captain Rouget (who, on his own initiative and without the smallest warrant, had ennobled himself as Rouget de Lisle) whether he would not seize the patriotic opportunity and write a march for the troops going to the front, a war-song for the Army of the Rhine.

Rouget, a modest, insignificant man, who had never regarded himself either as a great poet or as a great

THE GENIUS OF ONE NIGHT

composer (his verses were never printed, nor were his operas performed), knew, none the less, that he had a ready pen for topical lilt. To oblige this distinguished official who was also his good friend, he expressed his willingness. He would try what he could do. "Bravo, Rouget," said one of the generals, raising his glass. "If you write your march, send it me at the front. A good, rousingly patriotic marching song is something which will suit the Army of the Rhine to a T." At this moment another speech was begun. There were more toasts; there was more noise; and a great deal of wine was drunk. Like a mighty wave, the general enthusiasm swept over this casual conversation. More and more ecstatic, noisier and noisier, more and more frenzied became the carouse, and not till very late did the company in the mayor's house disperse.

It was long past midnight. April 25, the day of the declaration of war which had aroused so much excitement in Strasbourg, was over, and April 26 was well under way. Night brooded over the houses; but the darkness was deceptive, for beneath it the town was quivering with excitement. In the barracks the soldiers were getting ready for the march, and behind closed shutters many of the more cautious among the inhabitants of Strasbourg were preparing secretly for flight. Through the streets, here and there, marched platoons; now and again was heard the clatter of the hoofs of the dispatch-riders' horses; then would come the rattle of a heavy train of artillery; and occasionally were interspersed the monotonous calls of the sentries making their rounds. The enemy was too close, the town was too uneasy, for sleep to be possible at so momentous an hour.

Rouget, who had now returned to his quarters on an upper storey in Grande Rue 126, was himself greatly excited. He had not forgotten his promise to write as

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

quickly as possible a marching song for the Army of the Rhine. He tramped restlessly up and down the room. How was he to begin? How was he to begin? There was still ringing chaotically in his ears the stimulating appeal of the proclamations, the speeches, and the toasts. "Aux armes, citoyens! . . . Marchons, enfants de la liberté! . . . Écrasons la tyrannie! . . . L'étendard de la guerre est déployé!" But other words, too, came to his mind, words he had casually overheard, the voices of women trembling for their sons; the voices of peasants who were afraid that the fields of France would be trampled by enemy soldiers and would be drenched with blood. Half unconsciously he wrote the first two lines, which were no more than an echo, a repetition of these appeals:

Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!

Here he hesitated. That was all right for a beginning. Now the thing was to find the proper rhythm in which to continue, and to fit an air to the words. He took his violin out of the case, and tried a few notes. It was wonderful. In the very first bars he found something which perfectly fitted the words. Hastily he wrote some more, upborne, carried away, by the energy which had seized him. On the instant everything seemed to sweep him onward: all the feelings which had animated him at Dietrich's, all the words he had heard in the streets and at the supper-party, the hatred of tyrants, fears for his country, confidence in victory, the love of liberty. Rouget had no occasion to cudgel his brains; it was enough to put in order, to adapt to the stimulating melody that had come to him, the phrases which had assailed his ears everywhere that day; the utterances which had given expression to the innermost heart of the nation. Nor did he need to compose, for through the

THE GENIUS OF ONE NIGHT

half-closed windows came the rhythms of the street, of the hour; the rhythms of defiance and challenge which were voiced by the march of the soldiers, the blare of the trumpets, the anticipated thunder of the guns.

Perhaps his waking self was not writing or composing; it was rather the genius of the moment which had taken possession of him for this one night, and was controlling his mortal frame. Continually better adapted became the melody to the hammering, jubilant rhythm, the heart-beat of an awakened people. As if to another's dictation, Rouget wrote words and scribbled music more and more hastily. A storm such as he had never experienced had seized his narrow, middle-class mind. An excitement, an enthusiasm which were not his own, but which gave vent to the magical forces of an explosive second, lifted the dilettante a hundred thousand measures above his natural level, firing him like a rocket, an ascending flash of flame, which rose towards the stars. For this one night was vouchsafed to Senior Lieutenant Rouget de Lisle to become a brother of the Immortals. Words casually heard in the streets, words casually read in the newspapers, reiterated in his opening lines, became the theme of his creation, rising into a strophe which was as imperishable as is the air to which it is set.

Amour sacré de la patrie,
Conduis, soutiens nos bras vengeurs,
Liberté, liberté chérie,
Combats avec tes défenseurs.

Then, to add a fifth strophe, the last, the fruit of an excitement poured from the same mould, and as perfectly fitted as the others to the music. Thus, before dawn, was completed the song that will last for ever.

Rouget extinguished the light and flung himself on

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

his bed. Something, he knew not what, had endowed him with a clarity, an enthusiasm, such as he had never before experienced. Now, this same influence plunged him into profound exhaustion. He slept an abnormal sleep like the sleep of death. In very truth, the creator, the poet, the composer, the genius in him was dead. But on the table, detached from the sleeper who had worked this miracle in a sacred frenzy, lay the completed verses and the completed music. You will find scarcely anywhere in history record of another instance where song and air have been so speedily composed and so perfectly adapted each to the other.

As usual, the bells of the cathedral announced the morning. The wind blowing across the Rhine brought the sound of gun-shots, for the first skirmishes had begun. Rouget awoke. It was hard for him to climb out of the depths of sleep. He had an obscure feeling that some strange thing had happened to him, but what it was he could not at first remember. Then he caught sight of the verses lying on the table. Verses? When did I write those? Music? In my own handwriting? When did I compose that air? Oh, yes, the song which my friend Dietrich asked for yesterday, a marching song for the Army of the Rhine. Rouget read the verses and hummed the air; but, like all creators when faced with their newly finished work, he felt uncertain of himself. Well, his nearest neighbour was one of his regimental comrades. He went to the man's room, showed him the lines, and sang them. His friend thought well of them, merely suggesting a few trifling alterations. This first approval encouraged Rouget. With the natural impatience of an author, and pleased with himself for having fulfilled his promise so quickly, he went at once to call upon Mayor Dietrich, who was in the garden, having an after-breakfast stroll and thinking over a new speech.

THE GENIUS OF ONE NIGHT

"Hullo, Rouget? Have you finished already? Well, let's try it at once."

The pair went into the drawing-room. Dietrich seated himself at the piano and picked out the air, while Rouget sang. Attracted by the sound of music at this unusual hour in the morning, the mayor's wife came into the room, and, on being enlightened, undertook to make some copies of the new song. Being a well-trained musician, she would write an accompaniment so that the same evening, when they were to have company, it could be sung to their friends among other songs. Mayor Dietrich, who had a fine tenor voice, promised to study the composition more thoroughly; and, on April 26, in the evening of the very day when the song had been written and the air composed, it was produced before a chance-collected audience in Dietrich's drawing-room.

One gathers that there was friendly applause, and no doubt those present complimented the author upon his talents. Obviously, however, none of the guests at the Hôtel de Broglie in the great square of Strasbourg had the faintest notion that an immortal melody was being produced in their mortal presence. Rarely at the first glance do contemporaries grasp the greatness of a man or the greatness of his work. How very little Madame Dietrich had realized the stupendous significance of what was happening is shown by the wording of a letter to her brother in which she reduces a miracle to the level of a social occasion:

"You know how often we entertain company, and that we always have to find some source of distraction and amusement. It occurred to the Mayor to arrange for the writing of a march suitable to the declaration of war. Rouget de Lisle, a captain of engineers, who both writes verses and composes music, produced what was wanted very quickly. Friedrich, who, as you are aware, has a good tenor, sang the new song, which is most attractive,

and goes with a peculiar swing of its own. It is an improvement on Gluck's work more lively. I am arranging the orchestration— not only a piano accompaniment, but for other instruments so that I have plenty to do. 'The company was very much pleased with it when Friedrich sang it.'

"The company was very much pleased with it"—to us, who know the subsequent history of the song and the air, that seems to damn with faint praise. Still, such lukewarmness is perfectly comprehensible, for what afterwards became the Marseillaise could not possibly display all its energies at the outset. The Marseillaise is not a mere song for showing off a fine tenor voice in a drawing-room, for solo production sandwiched between ballads and Italian arias. A song fitted to the hammering, winged, challenging rhythms of "Aux armes, citoyens" is addressed to a crowd, to a multitude; and its true orchestration must be the clash of arms, the fanfare of trumpets, the march of regiments. It was not composed for an audience of comfortable folk, but for collaborating champions. It was never intended to be sung solo by a soprano or a tenor, but by the thousand-throated populace—this unexampled march, this song of victory and death, this national anthem of a great people. Nothing but an enthusiasm like that out of which it was born could give Rouget's song the requisite inspiration. It had not yet kindled the necessary response; the words had not yet secured their magical resonance; the melody had not yet thrilled the heart of the French nation; the army did not yet know its marching song, its hymn of victory; the Revolution was not yet acquainted with its undying psalm.

No more than the others did Rouget de Lisle, to whom, in the small hours of the morning, this miracle had happened, guess what had really befallen him that

night when, like a sleep-walker, he had been controlled and sustained by an insurgent genius. He was glad, of course, the worthy and amiable dilettante, that the guests at Dietrich's applauded Dietrich's singing and complimented the author of the composition. With the petty vanity of a petty creature, he tried to turn this little success to account in his narrow provincial circle. He sang the song over and over again to his comrades in the cafés; he had copies written and sent them to the generals of the Army of the Rhine. Meanwhile, by Mayor Dietrich's orders and at the instance of the Strasbourg bandmasters, the "War Song for the Army of the Rhine" was carefully studied; and a few days later, when some of the troops were going to the front, the band of the Strasbourg National Guard played the new march in the great square. With due patriotism, the Strasbourg publisher undertook to print the "Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin," which was respectfully dedicated to General Luckner by his subordinate. But not one of the generals of the Army of the Rhine ever thought of having the new words and music effectively sung and played by marching soldiers; and so the upshot was that, despite the approval of the audience in Dietrich's drawing-room, the success of "Allons, enfants de la patrie" seemed to be the success of one day, to be something that had been born and would die in the provinces.

But the energy with which a masterpiece is instinct cannot be permanently concealed. A work of genius may be forgotten for the moment, may be prohibited, may be confined; but, in the long run, the elemental will gain the victory over the ephemeral. For a month, for two months, nothing more was heard of the "War Song for the Army of the Rhine." The printed and written copies were put away on shelves or passed indifferently from hand to hand. But it will suffice that a few persons should display genuine enthusiasm for a work, since such

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

enthusiasm is necessarily creative. Far away, on the Mediterranean coast, in Marseilles, on June 22, the Club of the Friends of the Constitution gave a banquet to the volunteers about to march for Paris. At the long board were sitting five hundred ardent young fellows dressed in new uniforms, the uniforms of the National Guard. They were inspired with an enthusiasm akin to that which had fired the crowds in Strasbourg two months before; but their feelings were hotter and more passionate, as was proper to the southern temperament; and they were not so blindly confident of victory as the Strasbourgers had been in the first hour of the declaration of war. For the French revolutionary troops had not, as the Strasbourg generals had boasted, marched hot-foot across the Rhine to be received everywhere with open arms. On the contrary, the enemy had penetrated far into France; liberty was threatened; the cause of the Revolution was imperilled.

Suddenly, in the course of the banquet, a man named Mircur, a student of medicine from the University of Montpellier, clinked his glass and rose to his feet. The company was silent, staring at him. They expected a fighting speech. But instead of making a speech, the young man lifted his right hand and sang a song, a song which none of the company had ever heard before, beginning with the words "Allons, enfants de la patrie."

It was as if a spark had fallen into a powder-barrel. Deep called to deep. These young men who were to start for the north on the morrow, to fight for liberty and, if needs must, to die for their country, felt that these words gave expression to their innermost feelings, while the rhythms of the music aroused universal enthusiasm. Verse after verse was loudly applauded. Mircur had to sing the song to them a second and a third time. Now they had caught both the words and the music. The

THE GENIUS OF ONE NIGHT

whole audience rose, lifting glasses, and thundering the refrain: "Aux armes, citoyens! Formez vos bataillons!"

Passers-by in the street came in to learn what was being sung with so much enthusiasm, and joined in the singing. Next day the air was to be heard from a thousand, from ten thousand lips. It was reprinted; and when the five hundred volunteers departed on July 2, they took copies with them. If they grew tired on the march, if their steps flagged, it was enough for one of them to begin singing, and the enticement, the stimulus of the measure gave them renewed energy. When they passed through a village, and the inhabitants flocked round them curiously, the song was sung and the onlookers joined in the chorus. It had become the marching song of the Marseillais. They had adopted it as their own, without knowing that it had been penned for the Army of the Rhine, without being aware by whom it had been written and set to music. It was the hymn of their own battalion, it was the March of the Marseillais; it was dedicated to their life and to their death. It was their banner, and they would bear it through the world.

The first great victory of the Marseillaise, as Rouget's song was henceforward to be called, was in Paris. On July 30, the battalion tramped through the faubourgs singing the march. Huge crowds were awaiting them in the streets to give them a great reception, and when the five hundred Marseillais arrived, singing as with one voice, the assembled throngs listened with attent interest. What a splendid song these men from Marseilles were singing. It appealed to all hearts, thrilled like a trumpet blast, this "Aux armes, citoyens!" Two or three hours later, it was being sung in all the streets of Paris. Forgotten was the Ça ira, forgotten were the time-worn couplets; the Revolution had found its voice, had discovered its song.

Now the Marseillaise went with the rush of an

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

avalanche. Its victorious course was irresistible. It was sung at banquets; in the theatres and in the clubs; then in the churches after the *Te Deum*, and soon instead of the *Te Deum*. Within one or two months the *Marseillaise* had become the song of the whole French people and of the whole French army. Servan, the first Republican minister for war, was quick to recognize the tonic, the exalting energy of this unique national battle-song. He hastened to order that one hundred thousand copies should be distributed to the various army headquarters, and within two or three nights the work of the unknown Rouget was more widely diffused than had been anything ever written by Molière, Racine, or Voltaire. There was not a festival that did not close with the singing of the *Marseillaise*; there was not a battle that did not begin to the strains of the war-song of liberty. At Jemappes and Nerwinden, the regiments advanced to the strains of the *Marseillaise*; and the enemy generals, who were acquainted with no other means of stimulating their soldiers than the issue of a double tot of brandy, were alarmed to find that they had nothing with which to counteract the explosive force of this terrible hymn which, when sung by thousands upon thousands of voices, drove the French forward like a wave that roared as it swept away the invaders. At the battles now fought by revolutionary France, rushing thousands into enthusiasm and death, the *Marseillaise* showed all the power of Nike, the winged goddess of victory.

Meanwhile, in the little garrison town of Hünningen was Rouget, a practically unknown captain of engineers, designing ramparts and trenches. Perhaps by now he had forgotten the "War Song of the Army of the Rhine" which he had composed in the small hours of the morning on April 26, 1792; and never dreamed, when he read in the papers about a hymn which had taken Paris by

storm, about the victorious March of the Marseillais, that this, word for word and note for note, was what he had written and composed during that marvellous night.

By one of "life's little ironies," the melody which was storming the heavens, and assailing the stars, failed to exalt the very man who had launched it into the world. No one in France was bothering about Captain Rouget de Lisle. The greatest fame which had ever been attached to a song was limited to the song, and absolutely none of it accrued to the author. His name was not printed on the innumerable copies that were issued from the Press; and he would have been completely disregarded by the lords of the hour had he not, in his vexation, brought himself to their notice. For, by one of those paradoxes which are the amusement of history, the creator of the revolutionary hymn was not himself a revolutionary. On the contrary, he who more than any other man had stimulated the Revolution by his imperishable song, would now, if he could, have arrested its progress. When the Marseillais and the Parisian mob, singing his song, stormed the Tuileries, and deposed King Louis, Rouget de Lisle had had enough of the Revolution. He refused to take the oath of fealty to the Republic, preferring to resign his commission rather than serve the Jacobins. To him, being sincere, the apostrophe to "Liberté chérie" was no empty phrase. He hated the new tyrants and despots of the Convention no less than he had hated the crowned and anointed tyrants across the frontiers. He openly expressed his disaffection when the Committee of Public Safety shepherded to the guillotine his friend Mayor Dietrich, godfather of the Marseillaise, General Luekner to whom the song had been dedicated, all the officers and nobles who had first heard it sung at the house in the Place de Broglie. Soon, therefore, a grotesque situation developed. The poet of the

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

Revolution was arrested as a counter-revolutionary, on a charge of treason to the Republic. Only the events of the Ninth of Thermidor, which opened the prison doors when Robespierre fell, saved the French Revolution from the shame of executing by the "national razor" the writer of its immortal paean.

Nevertheless, if that had happened to Rouget, he would have died a heroic death, instead of being condemned to pitiful obscurity. For more than forty years, for thousands upon thousands of days, the unlucky poet survived the one creative day of his life. He was stripped of his uniform and was deprived of his pension. His poems were not printed and his operas were not performed. Destiny could not forgive this dilettante the crime of having, without warrant, been numbered among the Immortals.

The little man gained his petty livelihood in dubious and not always creditable ways. In vain did Carnot, and subsequently Bonaparte, try to help him. Rouget's character had been poisoned, had been kiiked, by the cruelty that had made him a god and a genius for three short hours, and then contemptuously flung him back into the obscurity to which he rightfully belonged. He wrote querulously to persons in authority; to Bonaparte he addressed impudent and pathetic letters, at the time when he was publicly boasting that he had voted against the Dictator in the plebiscite. He became involved in a number of shady affairs, and even spent some time in the debtors' prison of Ste. Pélagie on account of an unpaid note of hand. Generally disliked, pestered by duns, spied upon by the police, he ultimately buried himself somewhere in the provinces, and there, as if from a tomb, shunned and forgotten, listened to the fate of his immortal poem. He heard the Marscellaise storming across Europe at the head of the victorious armies; he learned that Napoleon, having become Emperor, banned

THE GENIUS OF ONE NIGHT

it as too revolutionary; and then that the Bourbons absolutely prohibited it.

Once only was the embittered old man surprised, when, after a generation, at the time of the July revolution in 1830, his words and his music were resurrected in their ancient force at the barricades of Paris, and the bourgeois monarch Louis Philippe assigned him a small pension as its author. To the forgotten poet it seemed like a dream that anyone should still think of him; but this was no more than a flash in the pan, and when, in 1836, he died—seventy-six years of age—at Choisy-le-Roi, no one any longer remembered his name.

Several generations had to pass until, during the days of the Great War, when the Marseillaise, having long since become the national anthem, was sung victoriously on all the French fronts, the Government issued an order that the corpse of Captain Rouget should be exhumed for reinterment in the Invalides, near the corpse of the sometime Lieutenant Bonaparte. Thus, at long last, the body of the little-known author of an immortal song rests in his country's pantheon, in the mausoleum of the mighty dead, after the protracted disappointment of having been nothing more than the poet of one night.

THE DECISIVE HOUR AT WATERLOO



JUNE 18, 1815

FATE is prone to reserve her smiles for the mighty, and for those who do great deeds. She will remain faithful for years to one man, will be the devoted slave of a Caesar, an Alexander, or a Napoleon; she has a liking for primitive natures, akin to herself—incomprehensible, unfathomable.

Yet, occasionally, at very rare intervals, she sets her cap at some inconspicuous mortal, placing in his hands threads of doom, the clumsy weaving of which may change the course of history. The poor fellows on whom Destiny thus bestows her favours are alarmed rather than delighted; they are overwhelmed by the torrent of responsibility which sweeps them into the mighty river of world happenings. For the most part, therefore, they allow the threads to slip from their tremulous fingers. Seldom indeed do events prove so cogent that even the weakling is carried upward to soaring heights. The great moment passes swiftly, and he who fails to grasp his opportunity will never be vouchsafed another.

GROUCHY

The Congress of Vienna was at the height of its activities. Into the midst of its balls, its love-affairs, its intrigues, and its squabbles, came the terrifying news of Napoleon's escape. The chained lion had burst from

THE DECISIVE HOUR AT WATERLOO

his cage, and was rushing on Paris. Couriers arrived breathless with the news that Lyons had rallied to his side, the King had fled, the troops were flocking to Napoleon's standard with fanatical zeal, he was in Paris, in the Tuileries! Had Leipzig, then, been vainly fought and won? In vain the twenty long years of struggle and the killing of men? Europe's representative statesmen, a moment before at odds with one another, were gripped together as in a vice at these formidable tidings. An English army, and one each from Prussia, Austria, and Russia, must forthwith be assembled; a concentrated and final blow must be dealt the usurper without delay. Never had the Europe of emperors and kings been so united as in this first moment of horror. Wellington came down from the north; Blücher advanced with his Prussians from the east; Schwarzenberg made preparations on the Rhine; and, as reserve, the Russians, slow and heavy-footed, came marching across the plains of Germany.

Napoleon realized in a flash the danger with which he was threatened. He knew that it would be fatal for him to postpone action until the whole of the pack had assembled. He must disrupt them, must attack each separately, the Prussians, the English, the Austrians, before they could constitute themselves into a European army for the destruction of his Empire. He must use the utmost dispatch: must forestall the discontent likely to arise in France itself; must become a victor again before the republicans got any stronger and allied themselves to the royalists; before Fouché, the double-tongued and inscrutable Fouché, could join forces with Talleyrand (who, though he was Fouché's antagonist, was really a man of the same kidney), and before the two together could stab him in the back. He must launch his armies while the men were still at the height of their enthusiasm. Every day that was allowed to pass was a

day lost; every hour that slipped by unutilized would bring fresh danger.

He throws the dice, and they decide for him: Belgium shall be the bloodiest battlefield of Europe.

On June 15, 1815, at three o'clock in the morning, the Grande Armée, the only army left to France, crossed the frontier. On the 16th, the Prussian forces were attacked at Ligny and beaten back. This was the first blow of the lion's paw since his escape, a formidable blow, though not a deadly one. The Prussians, defeated but not exterminated, withdrew towards Brussels.

Now Napoleon prepared his second blow, this time against Wellington. No space for a breather; each day was bringing reinforcements to the enemy, and the country in the rear, with its restless people blest white by previous wars, must be kept intoxicated with tidings of victory. During the 17th, he marched his whole army towards the heights of *Quatre-Bras*, where Wellington, the cool and steel-nerved foe, was entrenched. Never had Napoleon's disposition of his forces been made with greater care, nor his orders been more precise, than on this day. He weighed and pondered the attack and its hazards—for he realized that Blücher would make every endeavour to effect a junction with Wellington. To hinder such an eventuality, he sent part of his army in pursuit of the Prussians, with orders to dog the fierce old German commander step by step, and to make sure that the Allies should remain severed.

The command of this force was entrusted to Marshal Grouchy.

Now Grouchy was an average man, good, honest, brave, trustworthy; a leader of cavalry, often quite excellent in his leadership, but a cavalry leader and nothing more. No Murat was he—not the dashing officer who was wont to storm forward at the head of his men like a berserker of old; no strategist, like St. Cyr and

THE DECISIVE HOUR AT WATERLOO

Berthier; no hero, like Ney. Around his name clung no legendary glory; no obvious distinction of character had brought him a warrior's renown or position in the heroic age of the Napoleonic saga. The only thing which has made him famous has been his want of initiative on this luckless day of Waterloo. But for that, who would ever have heard of Grouchy? For twenty years he had played his part on every battlefield, whether in Spain or in Russia, in the Netherlands or in Italy; slowly he had worked his way up to the position of marshal; he certainly merited the dignity conferred upon him though it was not granted for any conspicuous deed of valour. The Austrian bullets, the Egyptian sun, the Arab dagger, and the Russian winter had cleared many seniors from his path; Desaix had fallen at Marengo, Kléber in Cairo, Lannes at Wagram. Not by storming the heights did he win advancement; but only by plodding service through twenty years of campaigning.

Napoleon was well aware that in Grouchy he possessed no hero, no great strategist; but he knew that Grouchy could be relied upon to carry out orders, that the marshal was a faithful, worthy, and cautious man. Half of the Emperor's marshals now lay under the sod; others were sulking in their homes, worn out with perpetual fighting. He was therefore constrained to entrust a decisive responsibility to a man of mediocre talents.

On June 17, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, one day after the victory at Ligny, one day before the Battle of Waterloo, Napoleon ventured to entrust Grouchy with an independent command. For one moment in time, for the space of twenty-four hours, the unpretentious marshal emerged from the hierarchy of military nobodies into the arena of world history. For one moment only—but what a moment! Napoleon's instructions were clear. While he himself was attacking the English, Grouchy, with one third of the French army, must pursue the

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

defeated Prussians. Nothing could be simpler, more straightforward, less open to misinterpretation; and yet the order was as supple and double-edged as a sword, for, while carrying out the pursuit, Grouchy was ordered to keep up communications with the main army.

Reluctantly the marshal accepted this commission. Unaccustomed to think and act for himself beyond the range of his chief's eyes, he felt at ease only when Napoleon was at his elbow to tell him what to do. He knew that his generals lacked confidence in him; perhaps, too, he already felt the sinister touch of fate. His only consolation was that he was not likely to get far away from the headquarters of the Grande Armée!

It was pouring with rain when Grouchy set out on the quest. Slowly, through the sticky, swampy clay soil, his men made their way in pursuit of the Prussians, or at least in the direction it was thought Blücher had taken after his recent defeat.

THE NIGHT AT GAILLOU

The cold northern rain fell without a pause. Napoleon's men squelched through the mire like a flock of sodden sheep, each soldier carrying several pounds of clay on his boots. When time came for a halt, there was no chance of shelter from the pitiless downpour. The available straw was too wet to sleep on, so the poor fellows clustered by tens or by dozens, and went to sleep thus, sitting back to back in the soaking rain. Napoleon himself could get no rest. A feverish state of tension kept him on the go, for his lines of communication had broken down more or less on account of the exceptional weather, and his dispatch-riders brought conflicting news. He did not yet know whether Wellington intended to join battle, nor had he heard from Grouchy concerning the

THE DECISIVE HOUR AT WATERLOO

whereabouts of Blücher. At one o'clock that night, defying the elements, he sallied forth within range of the British bivouacs to a point whence the fires could be dimly seen through the driving sheets of rain. Now he made his plan of attack. With the first grey gleam of the new day he returned to his headquarters at Caillou farm, where he received Grouchy's first dispatch. This was a somewhat cryptic document, containing little news of Blücher's movements, but expressing a determination to stick to his trail. Gradually, as the day advanced, the weather moderated. The Emperor, fretted by the delay, paced up and down the room, and gazed at the horizon to see if the clouds were lifting.

By five o'clock the sky had begun to clear, and the Emperor's gloom was soon dispelled likewise. He issued orders that everything should be ready for an attack at nine o'clock. The dispatch-riders galloped away in all directions. The drums sounded the assembly. Now, at last, Napoleon flung himself upon his bed for a couple of hours' rest.

THE MORNING OF WATERLOO

Nine o'clock had already struck, but the troops had not yet been fully massed for the attack. The three days' rain had made the ground soft and sticky, so that every manœuvre was difficult, and the heavy guns were inclined to get bogged. The sun was slow in piercing the clouds, and a chill wind swept across the plain. This was no longer the sun that had shone on Austerlitz, so full of warmth and promise; it was a cold and discouraging luminary, the sun of grey northern skies. When at length the army was in fighting trim, Napoleon mounted his white mare and rode the whole length of the front, reviewing the troops. The eagles drooped to the salute, the cavalymen rattled their sabres, the infantry swung

their bushes aloft on their bayonet points. The drums rolled, and the bugles blared forth a brazen greeting to the great commander; but the fanfare was a mere accompaniment to the thunderous roar from the throats of the soldiers as they yelled "Vive l'Empereur!"

During the whole of his twenty years' campaigning Napoleon had never held a more magnificent review, nor one in which greater enthusiasm was displayed. Hardly had the noise ceased when, at eleven o'clock (two momentous hours later than Napoleon had planned), the gunners received the order to fire on the redcoats. Then Ney, "le brave des braves," rode forward, and with him marched the infantry. "Waterloo" had begun.

This battle has been described a hundred times, and yet one never wearies of the story. We read it again and yet again—in the impassioned rhetoric of Walter Scott's verse, in the episodic portrayal of Stendhal's prose, or in the prose-poem of Victor Hugo. The whole battle is a work of art in the realm of tense, dramatic feeling, with its perpetual swing from anxiety to hope, its sudden dissolution at the catastrophic moment; it is symbolical of the tragedy of Napoleon's life, for the issue of this day decided the fate of Europe for decades to come, and marked the close of Napoleon's meteoric career.

From eleven o'clock till one, the French regiments stormed the ridges, taking villages, capturing positions, thrust back only to sweep forward once more. Ten thousand corpses bestrewed the clayey land, and yet nothing had been achieved by one side or the other. Both armies were weary; both commanders were uneasy. Each of them knew that victory was for him who was the first to get reinforcement: Wellington from Blücher's troops; Napoleon from Grouchy's. Again and again, Napoleon swept the horizon with his spy-glass; fresh and ever fresh orderlies were sent to reconnoitre.

THE DECISIVE HOUR AT WATERLOO

If Marshal Grouchy arrived betimes, the sun of Austerlitz would once more shine on the fair land of France.

GROUCHY'S BLUNDER

Grouchy, all unaware that he held Napoleon's fate in his hands, acted on his instructions, and started in pursuit of Blücher on the evening of June 17. The young troops, having smelt powder for the first time on the previous day, swung forward gaily to fulfil their mission. But there was no sign of the enemy; not a trace of the defeated Prussians to be found.

Suddenly, on the morning of the 18th, just as the marshal was about to snatch a mouthful of food, the earth trembled beneath his feet. He and his staff were instantly alert. Again the rumbling noise was heard, and yet again. It must be cannon fire, batteries afar off, and yet not so very far, three hours' march at most. A couple of officers threw themselves on the ground, to try and catch the direction whence the firing came. It was steady and continuous. They were listening to the first shots of the Battle of Waterloo.

Grouchy held council. Gérard, his second in command, urged, "Il faut marcher au canon!" Another officer similarly pressed him to make for the scene of action. They were now convinced that the Emperor had started his attack on the English, and that a great battle was in progress. Grouchy wavered. He was accustomed to obey, and therefore clung to his written instructions. The Emperor had ordered him to pursue the Prussians! Gérard became more insistent when he perceived his chief's hesitation. "Marchez au canon!" The exclamation sounded more like a command than a request, and Grouchy was piqued at being addressed in such a tone before the twenty or so officers and civilians gathered round him. He declared in no uncertain voice that he

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

meant to obey orders until fresh ones came. The officers were crestfallen, and stood silently by while the distant guns continued to thunder.

Gérard then made a last effort. At least let him take his division and a handful of cavalry to the field of battle. He had just got time to get there! Grouchy reflected. He reflected for a second.

A SECOND OF TIME IN HISTORY

In the farm-house at Wallhain, Grouchy reflected for one second, and this second decided his own fate, together with that of Napoleon and the world. The destiny of Europe hung on the word of a good and worthy man, in whose nerveless fingers the paper containing the Emperor's orders now rustled ominously. If only Grouchy could have resolved on a bold action, could have made up his mind to disobey his orders, could have believed in himself and in the obvious sign that was given him, France might have been saved. But a second-rater clung to the written word, and was afraid to answer the call of destiny.

Grouchy stubbornly rejected his officers' advice. It would be madness to divide up a force that was already so weak in numbers. His duty was to follow the Prussians, and nothing more. He refused to disobey the Emperor's orders. The officers listened, moodily. Grouchy was surrounded by an impenetrable wall of silence. And in that silent enclosure something went by, something that neither words nor deeds could ever recapture—the decisive moment. Wellington had conquered!

Thus they continued on their way; Gérard and Vandamme furious, Grouchy more and more uneasy with every hour. For still there was no sign of the Prussians; they had obviously turned aside from the

THE DECISIVE HOUR AT WATERLOO

road to Brussels. Soon, information was brought in that Blücher's retreat had changed into a flanking movement towards the field of operations. There would still have been time, by using the utmost dispatch, to rally to the Emperor's assistance. With growing impatience Grouchy awaited the order for his return. But no order came. Only the roar of guns was heard thundering over the shuddering earth: only the shaking of the iron dice at Waterloo.

THE AFTERNOON OF WATERLOO

Meanwhile, on the battlefield, by one o'clock four attacks had been repulsed, but Wellington's centre appeared to waver. Now, thought Napoleon, was the moment for a final assault. He strengthened the batteries at Belle Alliance, and, before the smoke of the firing blotted out the view, he again swept the horizon with his glass.

What was that dark object away to the north, on the skirts of the wood? A body of troops? His staff officers all turned their spy-glasses in the same direction. Could it be Grouchy who, boldly disregarding his orders, had appeared thus opportunely? But a Prussian hussar officer captured near Lasne was brought to Napoleon. He declared it to be the advance guard of General von Blücher's army. The Emperor at once realized what Blücher's manoeuvre must have been; he realized that the Prussian had given Grouchy the slip, and had effected a junction with the British ally. One third of the Grande Armée was, meanwhile, operating in the void. The Emperor immediately sent fresh orders to Grouchy. At any cost, the Prussians were to be kept out of the fight.

Ney was then told to make a fresh attack. Wellington must be beaten before the Prussians could come to his

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

aid; no endeavour seemed too audacious in view of the increasing odds. There followed those terrible assaults which occupied the better part of the afternoon, and which brought more and ever greater masses of infantry into action. The same villages were captured and lost a dozen times; again and again the eagles rushed forward on the British squares. Still Wellington held firm; still no news came from Grouchy.

"Where is Grouchy? Where can he have got to?" growled Napoleon, as he perceived that the Prussians were gradually being brought into the fray. Suddenly he made up his mind to stake all on a single cast. Marshal Ney, as foolhardy an officer as Grouchy was a cautious one (he had already had three horses shot under him), was ordered to lead the whole of the French cavalry to the charge. Ten thousand cuirassiers and dragoons galloped forward, breaking into the British squares, sabring the gunners, trampling down the infantrymen in the front ranks. Though the main force of the red-coats was able, in the end, to repulse the mad onslaught, the solidity of the English army was shaken, the iron fist which had kept so tight a grip upon those ridges was losing hold at last. The decimated remnants of the French cavalry withdrew to give place to the last reserves of Napoleon's army, the men of the Old Guard. Slowly and laboriously they went forward to the attack upon the height, possession of which was to determine the fate of Europe.

THE DECISION

Four hundred guns had been belching forth smoke and thundering over the plain since midday. The dashing cavalcades of horse had been broken, wave upon wave, against the firing squares; the air had been filled with the long roll of drums; the whole world seemed rent with

THE DECISIVE HOUR AT WATERLOO

noise. Each of the two commanders was alert upon his separate ridge, each was straining his ears to catch a special sound amid the din.

Each held a watch in his hand; the gentle ticking sounded like the throbbing of a bird's heart. Each gazed down at the welter of men on the battlefield. Napoleon and Wellington counted the hours, the minutes, as they waited for the reinforcement which would give one or other of them the victory. Wellington knew that Blücher could not be far away; Napoleon hoped that Grouchy was near. All hung in the balance, but a little weight in either scale would be enough to decide the issue. Each kept his glass fixed upon the edge of that wood where a tiny cloud seemed to herald the approach of the Prussian advance guard. Was it only the advance guard, or was it the army itself, fleeing before Grouchy's troops? The English side was making a last stand, the French were becoming exhausted. Like two wrestlers, they seemed to sob for breath, their arms hanging loosely. They were pausing for a moment before the final struggle. The last round was at hand.

At length the roar of cannon was heard on the Prussians' flank; skirmishers, musketry fire. "Enfin Grouchy!" Napoleon, now convinced that danger no longer threatened from that quarter, assembled the whole of his remaining forces and hurled them once more upon Wellington's centre, hoping to break the English circle round Brussels and thus open the door of Europe.

But the firing which had led the Emperor to believe that Grouchy was coming back to his aid had been merely the noise of a skirmish between Prussians and Hanoverians who had exchanged volleys under a misapprehension. As soon as the mistake had been rectified, the advance of the reinforcement was resumed, and now, unhindered, a mighty stream of men flowed forth from

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

the wood. Not Grouchy coming to help his master; not Grouchy, but Blücher! The news spread like wildfire through the ranks of the French army; the men fell back in confusion. Wellington seized his opportunity. He rode forward to the edge of the ridge his troops had so dauntlessly defended, raised his hat, and waved it in the air towards the staggering foe. The soldiers immediately grasped the significance of his triumphant gesture. Rising as one man, all that was left of the English army rushed upon the defenceless prey. Simultaneously, the Prussian horse charged the weary remnant of the Imperial army. A thrill of agony shot through the French lines, and the deadly words "sauve qui peut" passed from mouth to mouth. A moment or two later, and the Grande Armée was nothing but a disorderly torrent sweeping everything and everybody, even Napoleon himself, along in its unbridled flood. The French army was transformed into a panic-stricken rabble, and only the onset of darkness made Napoleon's escape possible.

He who at midnight, covered with mire, stunned and stupefied, flung himself on to a bench in a village inn, was no longer Emperor: his Empire, his dynasty, his destiny, had had the curtain rung down on them. The pusillanimity of a weakling, a man of no account, had destroyed in the twinkling of an eye what the boldest and most far-seeing of mortals had been building for twenty years.

THE RETURN TO THE LIFE OF EVERY DAY

Hardly had the French army been routed by the British, when a man whose name is famous enough to-day but was known to few in 1815, set out in a post-chaise towards the Belgian coast, where a vessel awaited him. He arrived in London before the official courier had had

THE DECISIVE HOUR AT WATERLOO

time to inform the Government as to the issue of the great battle. This forestaller was able to ensure huge profits by the purchase of stock which had been depressed by the news from Quatre-Bras. Rothschild thus founded another empire, established a new dynasty. Next day, England had tidings of a great victory; and Fouché, ready to play traitor, learned in Paris that Napoleon had sustained a crushing defeat. In Brussels, the joy-bells were pealing, and the tale of the Emperor's overthrow was speeding to reassure Europe.

One man was still, on the morrow, ignorant of the issue of Waterloo, and yet he was only a few hours' march from the battlefield. The unhappy Grouchy, following the letter of his instructions, was still on the trail of the Prussian army. Yet, strange to say, that army was nowhere to be seen, and Grouchy was filled with uneasiness.

Throughout the previous day the cannon had roared as if beseeching for help. The earth had trembled, and every shot seemed to pierce the heart. This could be no mere skirmish; it must be a warfare of titans. Grouchy rode among his staff; he was nerve-racked; his officers refused further discussion with him; he had rejected all their suggestions.

At last they reached Wavre, where they found one corps of Prussians, the rear-guard of Blücher's army. The French hurled themselves forward in a frenzy, Gérard in advance as if courting death. A shot laid him low; the most protesting voice was thus stilled. As night fell, they stormed the village; but they felt that this little rear-guard victory was worthless, for, of a sudden, the noise of distant battle was hushed. All was still, alarmingly quiet, horribly peaceful, the silence of death! The thunder of the guns was surely better than this ghastly haunting silence. What profited it now, that Grouchy should at length receive Napoleon's last despairing call

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

for help? The battle must be lost and won. But by whom?

All night they waited in vain for a message. It seemed that they had been forgotten. As day dawned they broke camp, and set out marching again, though assured that all their effort would be vain. At ten o'clock that morning an officer of Napoleon's general staff appeared before them. They helped him from his horse, overwhelmed him with questions. But he, his face distorted with horror, his hair sticking in damp wisps to his forehead, trembling from his superhuman exertions, could only stammer out words which none could understand, or which none wanted to understand. They took him for a madman, or was he perhaps the worse for drink? What was he saying? No more Emperor? No more Grand Army? France beaten? Little by little the narrative became more coherent, they learned of yesterday's disaster. Grouchy stood pale and speechless, leaning on his sword. Did he know that his martyrdom had now begun, a martyrdom which was to last till the end of his days? His resolve was quickly taken. He assumed sole responsibility. The subordinate who had been unable to decide upon independent action in the critical hour was now able to show himself a man. He gathered his officers about him, and, with tears of mingled wrath and anguish streaming down his face, he spoke to them, blaming himself for his hesitation and lack of initiative. His officers, who had murmured against him but yesterday, listened to his words in silence. Each of them could have hurled a reproach at his head, each could have shown his own counsels to have been wiser; but none ventured to condemn him, none indeed had any wish to do so. The searching agony of their sorrow made them dumb.

It was in this hour that Grouchy, all too late, was able to show his full power as a military leader. All his

THE DECISIVE HOUR AT WATERLOO

virtues, his caution, his thoroughness, his far-sightedness, his conscientiousness, came to the surface as soon as he placed confidence in himself and no longer in the written word of another. Surrounded as he was by enemies five times as strong as the force under his command, he succeeded by his masterly tactics in leading his little band through the Allied lines without the loss of a man or a gun, thus saving for France and for the Empire the remnant of the Grande Armée.

When he got back there was no longer any Emperor there to welcome him, no foe against which he could lead his faithful troop. He had returned too late, too late for ever. Although, in the end, his marshal's baton was restored to him, and he took his place again in the Chamber of Peers, although he filled his position with manly efficiency, nothing could ever make him forget that second of time when fate chose him for her master and he proved unequal for the part.

The great opportunity, so rarely offered to mortals, exacts a terrible revenge when it has been offered to one who is incompetent to make the most of it. All the bourgeois virtues—caution, obedience, zeal, and circumspection, admirable instruments for carrying a man along the river of everyday life—are dissolved into nothingness by the seething waters of a stupendous fate. The great hour, when destiny calls upon us for action, challenges the man of genius and moulds him into a lasting form, what time the faint-heart is brayed in a mortar and ground to powder. Only the man bold enough to seize a splendid opportunity is lifted to glorious heights, to enter the heaven where heroes dwell.

THE MARIENBAD ELEGY



ON September 5, 1823, a post-chaise was being driven along the highroad from Carlsbad to Eger. The chill of autumn was already in the air, a cutting wind swept across the stubble; but the sky spread a blue canopy overhead and the sun shone brightly. Three men occupied the chaise: von Goethe, privy councillor to the Grand Duke of Sachsen Weimar (as the visitors' book at Carlsbad informs us), and his two faithful companions, Stadelmann, his old body-servant, and John, the secretary who copied out nearly all the works Goethe wrote during the early decades of the nineteenth century.

None of the company uttered a word, for since leaving Carlsbad, where young women and girls bade the old man farewell with loving looks and kisses, Goethe had not once opened his lips in speech. He lolled back in the carriage, musing; but his face showed that he was inwardly stirred. At the first halt he alighted, and his two companions saw him scribble something on a piece of paper. The same thing happened each time the horse were changed on the journey to Weimar. Hardly did they set foot in Hartenberg Castle, the second day of the journey, when he started to write down what had been shaping itself in his mind during the drive; thus it happened in Eger, and again in Pössneck. His diary merely tells us laconically: "Worked at the poem" (September 6); "Sunday, went on writing the poem" (September 7); "Again went through the poem" (Sep-

THE MARIENBAD ELEGY

tember 12). At Weimar, the work was finished. It was no less a poem than the "Elegy" in his *Trilogy of Passion*, the most significant, most intimate, and therefore the most cherished poem of his old age; it was a heroic farewell, and marked a heroic new departure.

Once, in the course of conversation, Goethe spoke of this poem as "the diary of inner states"; and in very truth there is hardly a page of his ordinary diary that reveals the man's soul more plainly, more frankly, than does this tragically questioning document, this lament which wells up from the realms of his deepest emotions. Not one of his youthful lyrics can boast of a more vivid and actual origin in the facts of the poet's life; in none can we witness more clearly the building of the edifice verse by verse, strophe by strophe, hour by hour, than in this "wonderful song," in this deepest, maturest poem of a septuagenarian, a work aglow with rich autumnal tints. It is "the product of an extremely passionate state of mind," Goethe declared to Eckermann; it combines profound emotional ardour with the utmost sublimity in the matter of form; in a way simultaneously esoteric and exoteric, it depicts one of the most ardent moments in Goethe's life. Even to-day, a century after it was written, this page out of his eventful and tumultuous life is as fresh as ever it was, and for many a hundred years to come the fifth of September will remain a memorable date in the minds and the hearts of the lovers of German literature.

The dawn of a new day shone upon the poem, the man, and the hour. In February, 1822, Goethe had been seriously ill; he had had sharp attacks of fever, and almost lost consciousness at times. The symptoms were obscure, but alarming. His doctors did not know what to make of them. But the trouble passed as suddenly as it had come. In June, when he went to Marienbad,

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

he was completely transformed; as if, indeed, the illness had but been symptomatic of an inward rejuvenation, a "new puberty." Prior to this indisposition, he had become reserved, indurated, pedantic; the spirit of poetic creation had been overshadowed by one of dry erudition. Now feeling became dominant once more.

He tells us that music "disintegrates" him; he can hardly bear to play the piano himself, far less can he listen unmoved when it is played by so lovely a woman as Symanowska. The tears come to his eyes; he searches in his own depths for the ardours of his youth; his friends are astonished to see him spending half the night in the company of the ladies, to see him, the seventy-three-year-veteran, once more join in the dance. A being that had become petrified has by some magic art been brought to life again, and his spirit succumbs to the same witchery as of yore. The diary betrays him by such entries as "conciliatory dreams"; "old Werther" wakes up in him anew; the proximity of women inspires him to write little poems, makes him sportive and whimsical. He is back in the vein which had made him play tricks on Lili Schönemann half a century before.

But he has not as yet made his choice among the ladies. Is it to be the beautiful Polish woman? Finally his heart is set on Ulrike von Levetzow, a girl of nineteen summers. Fifteen years earlier he had loved Ulrike's mother; one year ago he had teased the "little daughter" in a most fatherly way. Now his affection grows to passion; his whole being is shaken as it has not been for many a long year past; the volcanic world of the emotions is in active eruption once more. The old man behaves like a boy; if her merry laugh floats up to him from the promenade, he will leave his work and hasten to join her, not stopping to take up his hat or his cane. He pays his court, too, like a young man. After a consultation with his doctor, he asks his oldest friend, the Grand Duke of

THE MARIENBAD ELEGY

Sachsen Weimar, to act for him, and to beg Frau von Levetzow to grant him her daughter Ulrike's hand in marriage. The Grand Duke, remembering many a night of boon companionship fifty years ago, amused and slightly envious of his friend, the man whom the whole of Germany, the whole of Europe looks upon as the wisest of the wise, as the most mature and most enlightened intelligence of the epoch—the Grand Duke solemnly dons his stars and orders and sallies forth on the mission. No one knows precisely what the mother's answer was; the lady seems to have wished to wait, to postpone her decision. Thus Goethe was a wooer, without any certainty as to the issue of his courtship. He had to be content with occasional stolen kisses, with loving words. Meanwhile the passionate longing once again to possess a lovely representative of young womanhood grew more and more ardent. With his customary impatience, he struggled to achieve the greatest momentary happiness: like the typical lover, he faithfully followed his beloved to Carlsbad. Here, too, all was uncertainty. As the summer advanced, his pangs grew more acute. At last the hour of separation struck; nothing had been settled, no vows had been exchanged. As the carriage rolled on its way, the great seer felt that something tremendous in his life had come to an end. But the immortal comrade of his most sorrowful hours consoled him in his present need: Goethe's genius stooped over him; and he who could find no solace for his trouble in earthly comforters, invoked the aid of his God. As so often before, Goethe took refuge in poetry. For the last time his personal experience was expressed in winged words. Grateful for the boon, the old man headed his poem with two lines from his play *Torquato Tasso*. He had written that drama forty years before, and was filled with amazement as he realized how aptly the verses fitted his present plight:

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

And when a man by grief had been made dumb,
God granted him to voice his woes in song.

As the old man sat in the jolting carriage, he was perplexed and troubled by his own anxious questionings. That very morning Ulrike had come with her sister to take part in "the tumultuous farewell"; he had felt her beloved young lips on his. But had the kiss been more passionate than a daughter's? Would she be able to love him? Would she not forget him? What about his son and his daughter-in-law? They were looking forward to being his heirs. Would they tolerate such a marriage? Would not he be making himself ludicrous in the eyes of the world? Would not he by next year have relapsed into senility? If he should ever see her again, what could he hope from such a meeting?

These questions coursed through his mind. Suddenly one of them took metrical shape, formed itself into a strophe. His need found poetical expression; God had given him power to express what he suffered. Openly and unashamedly his cry of anguish found its way into the poem:

What hope of once more meeting is there now,
In the still-closed blossoms of this day?
Both heaven and hell thrown upon thee thou;
What wavering thoughts within the bosom play!

Henceforward his suffering flowed in crystalline strophes, cleansed of all perplexities. As he was depicting the chaos of his feelings, "the oppressive atmosphere" of his spiritual condition, he chanced to look up. He saw the Bohemian countryside aglow in the morning sunshine, he saw the peace of the landscape contrasted with the tumult within himself, and the tranquil beauty of the scene breathed itself into his poem:

THE MARIENBAD ELEGY

Is not the world still left? The rocky steeps,
Are they with holy shades no longer crown'd?
Grows not the harvest ripe? No longer creeps
Th' espalier by the stream—the copse around?
Doth not the wondrous arch of heaven still rise,
Now rich in shape, now shapeless to the eyes?

But this world did not suffice, it was too soulless for his present mood. In such passionate hours he only cared for things in relation to the person of the beloved, and his memory of her was now renewed and transfigured:

As, seraph-like, from out the dark clouds' chorus,
With softness woven, graceful, light, and fair,
Resembling Her, in the blue ether o'er us,
A slender figure hovers in the air—
Thus didst thou see her joyously advance,
The fairest of the fairest in the dance.

Yet but a moment dost thou boldly dare
To clasp an airy form instead of hers;
Back to thine heart! Thou'lt find it better there,
For there in changeful guise her image stirs;
What erst was one, to many turneth fast,
In thousand forms, each dearer than the last.

As he conjured up her image, Ulrike took on tangible shape. He told how she received him and "gradually favoured" him, how after her farewell kiss she pressed "a very last" one on his lips. Stirred again by this recollection, Goethe depicted, in one of his sublimest strophes in the German tongue, the emotions of surrender and of love:

In the pure bosom doth a yearning float,
Unto a holier, purer, unknown Being,
Its grateful aspirations to devote,
The Ever-Nameless then unriddled seeing;

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

We call it piety!—such bless'd delight
I feel a share in when before her sight.

Yet, as reaction to these exalted sentiments, the poet felt all the more acutely the actual separation. Sorrow broke forth so poignantly that the elegiac mood of the poem was almost shattered. The emotions found such frank expression as is rarely met with, and then only as the spontaneous transfiguration of some vital and personal experience:

Now I am far! And what would best befit
The present minute? I could scarcely tell;
Full many a rich possession offers it.
These but offend, and I would fain repel.
Yearnings unquenchable still drive me on;
All counsel, save unbounded tears, is gone.

Then came the final, terrible cry:

Leave me here now, my life's companions true!
Leave me alone on rock, in moor and heath;
But courage! open lies the world to you,
The glorious heavens above, the earth beneath;
Observe, investigate, with searching eyes,
And Nature will disclose her mysteries.

To me is all, I to myself am lost,
Who the immortals' favourite erst was thought;
They, tempting, sent Pandoras to my cost,
So rich in wealth, with danger far more fraught;
They urged me to those lips with rapture crowned,
Deserted me, and hurled me to the ground.

Never before had this man, usually so reserved, committed such words to paper. As a youth he had hidden his deepest feelings; as a man he had held them in leash; he had been wont to use symbols and metaphors when

THE MARIENBAD ELEGY

disclosing his secrets to the world. Now, as an old man, for the first time he gave free rein to the verbal expression of his emotions. Not for many decades had the lyrical spirit been so active in him, had his sensitiveness been so exquisite, as when he penned this memorable page at a turning-point in his life.

Goethe himself regarded this poem as a mysterious and rare gift of fate. On reaching home, before he set himself to any other work, before he had time to look round, he made the task of copying it his first occupation. He wrote it out with his own hand, fair and shapely, on specially selected paper; he dealt with it as a monk with an illumination; three days he needed to complete the work. Then he hid the poem away from himself and from his housemates, even from those he loved best. A secret! When it came to binding the sheets, again he did the work himself, lest blabbing tongues should prematurely disclose his secret. He first chose a red morocco binding, but later he substituted a wonderful blue-linen cover, and it is in this dress that we may still see it in the Goethe and Schiller Museum.

Petty vexations were thickening round him. The idea of his marriage in the autumn of his days was met with contumely by the members of his family; his son, indeed, let hatred break forth, unrestrained. The poem was his only refuge from these troubles, his only means of communing with his beloved. Not until the beautiful Symanowska came to see him at Weimar did he recapture the delightful mood of the weeks in Marienbad.

At last, on October 27, he summoned the faithful Eckermann to his room, and it was obvious from the solemn way in which he prepared for the reading that he felt a special affection for this poem. His servant, first of all, had to place two wax candles on the writing-table; then Eckermann was requested to seat himself

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

near the lights; and, finally, he was handed the *Elegy* to read. Little by little, others were permitted to hear the poem, but only those who had Goethe's full confidence. As Eckermann tells us, he cherished the poem as if it were the most precious of relics. The next few months show the important part it was to play in his life.

The momentary rekindling of youthful fires was followed by a relapse. Death seemed very near once more. Goethe crawled from his bed to his arm-chair and back to bed again without finding rest or ease. His daughter-in-law was away travelling; his son was full of hate; nobody saw after the poor old invalid; he was forsaken. Then, obviously summoned to Weimar by one of Goethe's friends, Zelter came from Berlin. He was the most trusted of the poet's intimates, and was not slow to perceive the inner conflagration that was taking place. "What I found," he wrote in amazement, "was a man who looked as if he were consumed with love, consumed with all the pangs of youthful love." Zelter set himself to effect a cure; he read and read again and again, "with profoundest sympathy," Goethe's *Elegy*, and the old man was never weary of hearing it.

In the days of convalescence, Goethe wrote: "It was extraordinary, the way in which your well-modulated and moving voice interpreted to me something which is dearer to me than I venture to acknowledge even to myself." Alluding to the matter once more, he wrote: "I cannot let it out of my hands, but if we lived together you would have to read it to me and intone it until you knew it by heart."

Thus, as Zelter remarks, "healing came from the spear which had wounded him." It is no exaggeration to say that Goethe found salvation through this poem. His grief was gradually assuaged, his last tragical hope was laid to rest, his dream of a life together with his beloved "little daughter" had come to an end. He knew that

THE MARIENBAD ELEGY

never again would he go to Marienbad or to Carlsbad, never again mix in the cheerful company of the carefree; henceforward his life must be devoted exclusively to work. He had renounced the hope of a fresh start in life. A new word had entered the circle of his existence: fulfilment. He turned to contemplate the work of his long life devoted mainly to literary creation; saw that this work was disintegrated and fragmentary; and determined, since he could no longer build up new edifices, at least to collect all he had done and to form it into an integral whole. He signed the contract for an edition of his Collected Works.

His love which had so recently been bestowed upon a young girl was now lavished upon the two comrades of his youth: *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*. He set to with a will; he searched out the plans he had made in years long past and re-read the yellowing sheets. Before his eightieth birthday he had finished the revision of the *Wanderjahre*, and with heroic courage he went forward to the completion of his masterpiece, *Faust*. This task was ended seven years after the tragic experience of Marienbad; and with the same reverence he had displayed in regard to the Elegy, he locked this work away from the world.

Between these two spheres of emotion, between the final desire and the final renunciation, between a fresh start and fulfilment, we see the moment which was a turning-point in the poet's spiritual life, September 5, 1823, when the farewell spoken at Carlsbad, the farewell to love, became immortalized in a heartrending lament. The date is memorable, and even after the lapse of a century we may call it to mind with reverence, for German poetry has never reached sublimer altitudes than are attained in this magnificent Elegy.

(The extracts from the Elegy are from the English version by Edgar Alfred Bowring.)

ELDORADO



WEARY OF EUROPE

IT is 1834. A paddle-steamer is making its way from Le Havre to New York. Among the hundred or so desperadoes aboard is a certain Johann August Suter (later known as John A. Suter). He is thirty-one years old, has hitherto lived at Rynecberg near Basle, and is now hastily putting the ocean between himself and the European courts of law. A bankrupt, a thief, a forger, he deserts his wife and his children, goes to Paris, gets money supplied to him under false pretences, and, with several warrants out for him, is off over the waters to seek a new life. He lands at New York on July 7, and for two years keeps himself going with all possible kinds of occupations: he is by turns packer, druggist's assistant, dentist, ladies' tailor, tavern keeper. He then buys an inn, makes a success of the business, sells it, succumbs to the lure of the West and goes to Missouri. Here he takes up agriculture, soon acquiring a small fortune upon which he could have lived comfortably till the end of his days. He keeps open house to the uninterrupted stream of people flowing by: fur-dealers, hunters and trappers, soldiers and adventurers; they are coming from the West or are on their way westward, and the noise of their going works like a spell. Suter is told of the prairie stretching for miles, the prairie peopled with vast herds of buffalo, prairie to journey through which needs days upon days, prairie void of human inhabitants though

ELDORADO

crossed at times by red-skinned huntsmen; then come the mountains, huge, rocky, and unexplored; at last, on the farther side, is another land about which nobody knows much, but one famed already for its wealth—California. Here is a land flowing with milk and honey, free for any who should wish to settle there. But it is far away, very far away, and the journey thither is beset with dangers.

Johann August Suter has the blood of an adventurer in his veins. He finds no pleasure in living at ease on his broad acres. One fine day in the year 1837 he sells his goods and chattels, rigs out an expedition with wagons and horses and buffaloes, and in June, 1838, walks away from Fort Independence into the unknown.

THE MARCH TO CALIFORNIA

1838. Suter, an army officer named Ermatinger, five missionaries, three women—such is the little company which is journeying across the unending prairie, making its way over the giant mountain chain, and thence towards the Pacific. At the end of three months they reach Fort Vancouver. Not all of them, for the women have perished on the journey. Now the company of men breaks up. Captain Ermatinger is to stay at Vancouver, having been sent thither to take command of the fort. The missionaries from the London Bible Society are to devote themselves to the study of the Indian tongues. Suter is alone.

In vain do those in Fort Vancouver try to hold him back, offering him a good position if he will but stay. He refuses all offers, for the magic of a name works like a spell and lures him on. He crosses to the Sandwich Islands in a little sailing vessel, thence to Alaska, where he has to endure much suffering and privation. Finally he lands on a desolate beach where he finds a small

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

settlement, Yerba Buena by name, a Spanish presidio or military post, the spot where a Franciscan mission had been founded in 1776, the site of what was later to become San Francisco.

The usual disorder connected with Spanish administration was everywhere the rule; the governors were constantly being deposed or driven out of office, some in their fright actually leaving the province; there were revolts and rebellions; draught beasts were lacking, human labour was scarce, energy and enterprise were a crying need.

Suter hires a horse and wanders up the valley of the Sacramento. One day's exploration suffices to show him that here there is not only plenty of room for a farm, for a good-sized property; there is indeed ample space wherein to establish a kingdom. Next day he rides over to Monterey, at that time the miserable little capital of the country. He presents himself before Governor Alvarado and declares his intention to cultivate the land. He has slipped kanakas from the islands, will have these diligent and hard-working fellows brought over to the mainland at regular intervals; he pledges himself to build houses for his settlers, to inaugurate a colony, to found New Helvetia.

"Why New Helvetia?" queries the governor.

"I am Swiss, and a republican," is the reply.

"Very well, do as you propose. I will grant you a concession."

Land is almost valueless in this remote wilderness. So the governor makes him a present of forty-nine thousand acres on the one condition that he builds there a fort for the protection of the Mexican border. Titles are equally valueless, and so he bestows on the bankrupt the high-sounding title of "Commissioner of Justice and Representative of the Government on the frontier of the Sacramento." Highly satisfied with his new dignity, the future

ELDORADO

"Don Juan Augusto Suter, naturalizado de Mejico" rides back, feeling more prosperous than ever.

As is seen, business affairs were soon settled out there in those days. A thousand miles from the haunts of civilization a man of energy has a very different value from that which he had at home!

NEW HELVETIA

1839. A caravan is wending its way up the Sacramento valley. At its head goes Suter, ahorse. His firing-piece is slung over his shoulder; he is followed by two or three Europeans; then come one hundred and fifty kanakas in their abbreviated shifts; finally a herd of thirty buffaloes, with food, seed, and munitions, fifty horses, seventy-five mules, cows, and sheep. This is the army which is to conquer the land for the setting up of New Helvetia.

A column of fire precedes the caravan, for the forests are being put to the flame in order to facilitate progress. The blaze has hardly subsided when the men are already at work among the smouldering tree roots. Warehouses are built, wells dug, the virgin soil sown with seed, enclosures made for the flocks and herds. Gradually the colony grows, for men and women come from neighbouring settlements and from the abandoned missionary colonies.

The success of the undertaking beggars description. The crops yield a five-hundred-per-cent harvest. The granaries are filled to overflowing. Soon the herds can be numbered in thousands. Despite local difficulties, such as the incursions of natives into the blossoming land, New Helvetia develops with tropical luxuriance. Canals, mills, factories are built; boats ply up and down the river. Suter not only provisions Fort Vancouver and the Sandwich Islands, he likewise re-victuals all the vessels

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

putting into Californian harbours. He plants fruit trees, whose harvests are later to make the name of California renowned throughout the world. The success of this undertaking encourages him to import vines from France, and in a very few years the slopes are covered with vineyards. He builds houses and prosperous farmsteads; has a Pleyel pianoforte sent from Paris, the instrument taking one hundred and eighty days in transit; purchases a steam-engine in New York and has it brought by sixty buffaloes overland.

But the old speculator in Suter is still alive. As soon as he has an opportunity of becoming rich in his tiny canton, he wants to possess a whole kingdom. Wherever possible he buys more land, and after a few years he already owns 146,495 acres, although mostly acquired and cultivated with borrowed money. But his credit is still good in the best banking houses of England and France. His name becomes famous in California, Suter has more power in his little kingdom than all the monarchs of Europe: ruler absolute, the law in person, proprietor and administrator, justice of peace, parson and patriarch, matchmaker, protector of all the immigrants, and, last but not least, military commander of Fort Suter. His Swiss-German name had been Americanized now, by doubling the "t," and henceforward he was usually styled "General Sutter." In an old print he can be seen riding in state and wearing a fantastic general's uniform. He has everything. Only one thing is lacking to this king of the wilderness—the crown prince, the heir. At the age of forty-five, after a lapse of fourteen years, he suddenly remembers that he has left a wife and three sons in Switzerland. He writes to them and invites them to come. For the first time in his life he feels comparatively safe. What more could happen to him now? The United States would take over the country from the Mexicans, and, being under a

stable Government, his wealth would be stable as well. He owns the most fertile land in America, and so he is bound to become one of the richest men in the world.

THE FATEFUL GUT WITH A SPADE

1848. The month is January. James W. Marshall, Suter's carpenter, comes to his master in a great state of excitement. He must speak to the boss at once. Suter is surprised to see Marshall, for it was but yesterday that he sent the man to do a job at the farm in Coloma; a new saw-mill was to be set up. And here's the fellow back again without leave, shivering with excitement, pressing forward into the room, closing the door, and pulling from his pocket a handful of sand containing a few yellow pellets. Marshall explains that he was digging, when suddenly the spade turned up something which looked like gold, but his mates had laughed at him for thinking such a thing. Suter becomes serious at once; he takes the pellets, makes a test: they are, indeed, gold! He arranges to ride over to the farm on the morrow, in company with Marshall. But the latter is the first to succumb to the terrible fever which was soon to convulse the world. That very night, in spite of a raging storm, he rides back to Coloma.

Early on the following day, General Suter gets to Coloma. They empty the mill-race and test the sand in its bed. A sieve, a few shakings to and fro, and the gold nuggets lie gleaming on the dark wires. Suter gathers the few whites around him; he puts them on their honour not to say a word to anyone until the saw-mill is completed. Then he turns his horse's head about and rides home. His mind is filled with the wildest thoughts. As far as he knows, gold has never been easier to find, so openly lying on the ground for anyone to pick up. And the ground where it lies is his ground, is Suter's own and

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

undisputed property. A decade is transcended in one night. This one cut with the spade has made him a thousand times richer than before. He owns not only the most fertile soil in America, but he owns the most productive gold-mine. Now he is indeed the wealthiest man in the world, the king of Eldorado.

THE GOLD RUSH

The richest man? Nay rather, the poorest, the most pitiable, the most disappointed beggar in the whole of this earth! Within a week, the secret was a secret no longer. A woman—always a woman—had blabbed it to some passer-by and had given him a couple of nuggets. The consequences were unparalleled. All Suter's men incontinently left their work, the blacksmiths forsook their forges, the shepherds their flocks, the vine-dressers their grapes, the soldiers their muskets. They behaved like men possessed, hurrying to the spot with any old sieve or saucepan that came handy, sluicing gold from the sand. In one night the whole countryside was deserted; the cows bellowed vainly to be milked, the buffalo herds broke down the enclosures and stampeded through the fields crushing the crops, the churns were idle, the barns neglected; the whole mechanism of the giant undertaking had come to a standstill.

In vain he sends the watchmen after the fugitives. Instead of calling the gold-diggers back to their work, they themselves begin to dig for gold. But this is only the beginning. Soon the news gets to San Francisco. A man runs through the streets, a bottle full of gold-dust in his hands, and at once there is an exodus without precedent. By boat, by mule and horse, or on foot, go hundreds and hundreds, all eager to reach the sand before the others. Business houses close their doors, the service stops in the little church, a padlock is on the door

of the alcalde's office, the soldiers with their arms and horses run away. In vain the Government sends others after them; like Suter's own men, instead of catching the fugitives, they only think of overtaking them. No ship can be unloaded, because even the sailors have become gold-diggers. A few days later there is only about a quarter of the population left in San Francisco.

This human locust swarm is not to be stopped. With no law but club law, no judge but the revolver, it is a rabble rout that flows over the blossoming colony. The gold-seekers recognize no authority, and no one dares to oppose their will. They have no axes and no spades: therefore they break into Suter's magazines. They have no blankets for the night, no bread for the day: so they plunder huts and storerooms. Suter's country is everybody's country, Suter's gold is everybody's gold. They plunder and steal whatever falls into their hands, even the bell and the cannon of the fort disappear. Suter's cows are slaughtered, his barns demolished to build shanties, his fields trampled under foot, his machines stolen. In a flash, John Augustus Sutter is little better than a pauper; he is like King Midas of yore, for gold has been his ruin.

The stream of gold-hunters grows larger day by day. The telegraph has sent the news all over the world, from all the five continents adventurers are pouring in. For several months it seems as if three-quarters of the world's population would all like to settle on poor Suter's soil.

From New York, ere long, one hundred vessels have set sail for the West. During the years 1848, 1849, 1850, 1851, incalculable hordes of adventurers come to the land of promise from Germany, France, Great Britain, and Spain. Some sail round Cape Horn; but for many this is too slow a route, and they choose the more perilous way across the Isthmus of Panama. A mushroom company quickly lays down a railway over the isthmus and

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

thousands of workers become the victims of yellow fever, that the impatient may gain a few weeks and be earlier arrivals at the gold-fields. Others take the long overland route; men of all races and tongues form caravans to seek the new Land of Gold. Every treasure-hunter makes for Johann August Suter's broad acres and settles down there as if at home. On the land which had become his by agreements signed and sealed, there now arose the city of Sacramento; strange men haggled over the price of his property, selling it in lots regardless of the unhappy owner, and New Helvetia disappeared before the magical word, Eldorado.

Johann August Suter was again a bankrupt, and stared in speechless bewilderment at the amazing spectacle of the thousands and thousands trampling and settling on his property, buying and selling, digging and building without any regard for his rights.

At first he tried himself to take a share in the gold-digging, and with his comrades and servants to make good use of this unexpected wealth. But he does not succeed; he is only one among the thousands. But his aim is not just to earn a bit of money like the others: he wants to realize his eternal dream, to become one of the richest men of the world.

SUTER WAITS

Suter understands that he cannot assert himself against these hordes, who only recognize the right of the man who is more energetic in riding over the others or who is the quickest to draw his revolver. He has a presentiment that this delusion cannot last long, so he retires to a part of his estate which fortunately lies outside the gold district, away in the mountains, away from the cursed river and unholy sand; he retires to Hock Farm. It is here that his wife and his children at length join

him. But the hardships of the journey prove too much for the lady, and she dies soon after arrival. Still the three lads remain, and with them Johann August Suter sets to work once more to cultivate his land. Once again, this time aided by his three sons, he works his way up, quietly, tenaciously; and once more he reaps advantage from the amazing fertility of the soil. Great schemes, natural to his temperament, begin to shape themselves in his mind. He waits one year, two years, till his harvest ripens. Finally, 1850, California had definitely become part of the Union. After a period of chaos, order had at last been restored in the gold-mad land. Law had again come into its own.

And then Johann August Suter advances his claim. He declares that by right of purchase or by deed of gift all the sites where Sacramento and the other mushroom towns had been erected belonged to him, with all the houses and shops illegally built on his ground. The State, he maintains, is in duty bound to compensate him for his losses, and to hand over to him his share in the proceeds from the discovery of the gold. He brandishes his papers, his deeds, he sets the Law in motion, and a suit begins which for size has never had an equal. Suter threatens to prosecute the 17,221 squatters who have settled down on his erstwhile estates, ordering them to quit; he demands millions of dollars from the State of California as compensation for all the roads, canals, bridges, locks, and dams constructed by himself and appropriated by the State for the use of the public; from the Union he claims further millions of dollars indemnity to make good the damage to his property, and, in addition, he asks for his share of royalties from the gold.

Again, and for the third time, Johann August Suter has a chance to become one of the richest men of the world. The first time he had nearly become it through his soil. The second time through his gold. Now he has

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

his third chance: a sheet of paper, his claim. If he succeeds he will be once again the owner and king of Eldorado.

THE END

Eight years Suter has fought for his soil, one year for the gold; for this last claim he has to fight thirty years, till his death. The new Government is in no hurry to recognize the grants made by the Mexican Government. A thousand times Suter's soil has been sold in little lots, from third and fourth parties to fifth and sixth, houses have been built on his ground, and thousands would suffer a thousandfold, if the Government recognized Suter's claim. The commissions assemble and deliberate and adjourn again and again. Finally, on May 15, 1855, the law officer in the State of California awards him a part of his property. Suter is triumphant. Is he not again a rich man, a millionaire? But the desperate settlers on his reconquered soil protest and appeal. And alas, in the year 1858, the Supreme Court cancels the former decision and rules that three-quarters of Suter's property had never belonged to him. This judgment makes most valuable claims invalid, but unfortunately the sums advanced to him on these claims remain outstanding. Indebted on a property which no longer belongs to him, he is obliged to bring in new lawsuits. Every cent of the huge income from his new farms he devotes to legal expenses, and the fortune of which he dreamed is spent on lawyers' costs. Not less than 325,000 dollars he dissipates on this petitioning from one court to another. But he does not give in.

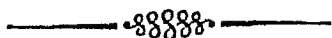
For the next twenty-five years a pitiful spectacle follows: an old and broken man in bedraggled attire haunts the precincts of the Law Department in Washington, pretending to be destitute. He is known to everyone

ELDORADO

there as "The General," who, down at heel and ragged, persists in demanding his millions. He himself does not want money; he detests the gold which has been his undoing. All he wants is justice, and he insists that justice shall be done, his demand assuming the querulous tone of an embittered monomaniac. He appeals to the Senate, to Congress.

Finally, in 1880, a last ray of hope begins to gleam. Someone of the mighty feels pity for the old man. A mild-hearted senator introduces a motion in Congress to grant the man who has done so much to promote California's greatness a compensation of fifty thousand dollars. Already this motion has found support when, owing to forthcoming elections, the matter is adjourned *sine die*. This adjournment is the final blow to Suter's hopes, and it strikes into his very heart. When the bad news is brought to him he falls in an apoplexy. And the man to whom all the gold of Eldorado once belonged receives instead of his 146,000 acres only six feet of soil, like any other man, in which to rest from his grandiose dreams of might and gold.

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC



THE NEW RHYTHM

THROUGHOUT the thousands, or more probably hundreds of thousands, of years during which the strange creature called Man has existed on the earth, all progress has been attuned to the slow pace of the swiftest horse, the turning wheel of carriage or of cart, the row-boat or the sailing-ship. Despite numerous technical advances within that narrow illuminated space to which we give the name of history, there had occurred no noteworthy acceleration in the rhythm of movement. The armies of Wallenstein moved no faster than the legions of Caesar, the levies of Napoleon did not reach their goal more quickly than the hordes of Genghis Khan, Nelson's corvettes traversed the seas little faster than the piratical galleys of the Vikings or the trading ships of the Phoenicians. When Lord Byron (as Childe Harold) in the early years of the nineteenth century travelled in Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and Greece, he could not cover any more miles in a day than Ovid covered on the way from Rome to his disconsolate exile at Tomi; Goethe's Italian journey in the eighteenth century was hardly more comfortable or swifter than had been the missionary travels of Paul the Apostle nearly two thousand years before. In the Napoleonic Empire the various countries of the world were as widely separated in space and in time as they had been in the days of the Roman Imperium. Matter still obdurately resisted the human will.

Not until the nineteenth century was well on the way

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

did there occur any fundamental change in the extent and rhythm of man's means of communication. Already in the opening decade the people of the world were brought much nearer together than they had been for thousands of years. Thanks to the locomotive engine and the steamboat it became possible to cover in one day distances which had previously needed many, hours of travel being reduced to minutes. Still, triumphal as this expediting of travel by means of railways and steamships seemed, these accelerations were still quite within the limits of conceivability. They meant merely that the speed of movement was increased fivefold, tenfold, twentyfold, for, both to outward observation and to inner contemplation, it was no more than a quickening of the movement with which everyone was already familiar. There was no change that seemed positively miraculous.

Utterly unexpected, however, were the very first achievements of electricity which—a Hercules already in the cradle—seemed to defy previously accepted laws, to render hitherto accepted measures infinitesimal. Never shall we of these later days recover the amazement felt by our grandparents when they contemplated the results of the introduction of the electric telegraph; never shall we recapture the excitement that seized them when what had begun as a mere spark an inch long, discharged from a Leyden jar, extended its operations as if by witchcraft until it could leap in an instant across countries, mountains, and continents. How perplexing, how fascinating was the new experience that words still damp from the pen could, between two ticks of the clock, be flashed to a distance of thousands of miles to be read and understood by the recipient; that the invisible current moving from pole to pole of the voltaic pile could reach from end to end of the earth—instantaneously, as it seemed; that what yesterday had been no more than a toy in the

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

physical laboratory, by means of which a glass rod rubbed with a silk cloth acquired the power of attracting little pieces of blotting-paper, had been developed into an instrument able, with the speed of lightning, to convey human thought across vast stretches of space, to bring light into our houses, and, like Ariel, to fly through the atmosphere unseen. This amazing discovery changed human notions of space and time as they had never been changed since the creation of Man.

Little attention is paid in our school-books to the wonderful year 1837, when the electric telegraph first brought widely separated places on the earth's surface into immediate touch, for it is an unfortunate fact that people are still inclined to teach the children more about the battles and the victories of army commanders and of nations than about the far more genuine, because uncontentious, triumphs of mankind. Nevertheless, there is no datum in modern history more momentous in its psychological effect than was this transformation of the values of time. The world became a new place when it was made possible to become aware in Paris of what was going on at that very moment in Amsterdam, Moscow, Naples, and Lisbon. But one step further was needed before the remoter continents, those separated from Europe by the seas, would likewise be brought into the general consciousness of a united humanity, would become simultaneous parts of the world brain.

But there were great difficulties in the way of this next step. For two more decades nature stubbornly resisted the joining of hands across the sea. Telegraph posts furnished with porcelain insulators could carry the electric current unimpaired across huge spaces of land, but as soon as the conducting wires were immersed in water the energy was hopelessly dissipated. Conduction across the sea remained impossible until there had been discovered an enveloping insulator which would

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

prevent leakage of energy into the circumambient waters.

Fortunately during this age of invention and discovery, one human achievement played into the hands of another. A few years after the introduction of the electric telegraph, gutta-percha was discovered as a suitable substance for insulating electric currents passed through water. Now the first steps could be made in the direction of establishing electric communication between England and the Continent. An engineer named Brett laid the first cable beneath the Channel along much the same line where, some seventy years later, Blériot was to make the first cross-Channel flight. By a piece of ill-luck, however, this first cable was destroyed by a Boulogne fisherman, who believed himself to have found an exceptionally long and tough eel, and tore it. On November 13, 1851, however, a second and successful attempt was made. Thus did England lose her unhappy isolation and become definitely part of Europe, having henceforward one heart and one brain with the Continent.

Naturally this great success within a few years (for in human history a decade is no more than the twinkling of an eye) was most encouraging. Success followed success with marvellous speed. Within a few years there was cable communication between England and Ireland, Denmark and Sweden, Corsica and France. Schemes were in contemplation for similar communication with Egypt, and thence by the overland route to India. But one part of the world, perhaps the most important of all, was still excluded. The Atlantic and the Pacific seemed too wide for any attempt to span their enormous distances with a cable. In those early days of electrical development, many of the important factors were still obscure. The depths of the ocean had not yet been plumbed; the geological structure of the sea-floor was still a mystery; and no one could tell whether, if a cable

should be laid, it would resist the terrific pressure of the water at such enormous depths. Even if these technical difficulties could be overcome, and a cable successfully laid, what ship was big enough and strong enough to be freighted with a rope which would have a length of not less than two thousand miles? Where were the generators of the electric current which would be required to span a distance which no steamer then built could cross in less than two or three weeks? No one knew, at that date, whether there might not be, deep down, magnetic currents which would interfere with electrical conduction. Would the insulators suffice in such unknown conditions? Electricity, like the Sleeping Princess of fable, had only just awakened from an age-long sleep, and the first laws of its being were scarcely known.

"Impossible! Absurd!" said the scientists of the day, when the plans for a Transatlantic cable were mooted. "Some day, perhaps," said the boldest of the technicians. Even Morse, the most noteworthy among the inventors of the electric telegraph, regarded the scheme as foolhardy. Still, speaking prophetically, he said that, if successful, the laying of a Transatlantic cable would be "the great feat of the century."

Faith in a miracle is the first requisite for its performance. The untutored courage of a man who did not belong to the world of scientists or technicians gave the requisite impetus when these experts held back, and, as so often happens, the final touch to a great enterprise was apparently the outcome of chance. A British engineer named Gisborne, who in the year 1854 was laying a cable to connect New York with Newfoundland that shipping movements across the Atlantic might be reported a day earlier, was held up by want of funds in the middle of his enterprise. He went to New York in search of financial help. There, by pure hazard which is the father of so many great things, he made the

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

acquaintance of Cyrus West Field, a pastor's son who was so good a man of business that not long afterwards he was able, while still quite young, to retire with a considerable fortune. At the moment, Field had no irons in the fire and, being extremely energetic, was not likely to be content with idleness for long. Gisborne approached him to enlist his interest in the completion of the laying of the New York-Newfoundland cable. By good luck, Field was neither electrician nor technician; was in no sense an expert. He knew nothing about electricity and had never seen an electric cable. But he was full of faith and enterprise, of American pep and vim. Whereas Gisborne, the engineer, was only concerned with the completion of his present enterprise, Cyrus Field was promptly inspired with a more ambitious idea. Why not lay a cable connecting Newfoundland with Ireland? With an energy which was to overleap all obstacles (he crossed the Atlantic both ways no less than thirty-one times) Cyrus Field got resolutely to work, devoting himself whole-heartedly to this great scheme. He was the spark that fired the explosive, transforming idea into fact. The wonder-working force of electricity was now intensified by the interfusion of the other most powerful dynamic element of life—the human will. A man had found his task, and the task had found its man.

PRELIMINARIES

Cyrus Field got to work with marvellous speed. He opened negotiations with all possible experts, besieged the Government with a demand for concessions, drummed up money in both hemispheres. So intense was the vigour radiated by this young man previously unknown, so firm was his own conviction, so overwhelming his faith in the possibilities of electricity, that the

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

initial capital of £350,000 was subscribed in England within a few days. As soon as the Atlantic Telegraph Construction and Maintenance Company had been founded by business men of Liverpool, Manchester, and London, money flowed in. Among the founders of the company you may read the name of William Makepeace Thackeray, who had no connection either with business or with engineering, but was inspired with a purely moral enthusiasm for the work. Assuredly nothing can better exemplify the widespread optimism that permeated England during the age of such great engineers as Stephenson, Brunel, and others, than that the mere demand for funds on behalf of a seemingly fantastic enterprise should meet with so ready and so extensive a response.

For the only thing certain about the whole affair was that it would cost a great deal of money. There were no technical precedents for anything of the kind. During the first half of the nineteenth century nothing so stupendous had ever been conceived. What comparison was there between bridging the Atlantic with an electric cable and the crossing of the little span between Dover and Calais? There, all that had been needed was to unroll from twenty to thirty miles of cable from the deck of an ordinary steamship, and the affair went as easily as dropping an anchor. No more was necessary, as far as the Channel was concerned, than to wait for fine weather. The depths were perfectly known, the ship would never be out of sight of land, so there could be no serious risk. The submergence of the cable could be achieved within a single day. But a far more serious problem had to be faced during a continuous voyage of at least three weeks. A cable a hundred times longer and a hundred times heavier could not be simply coiled on the deck, making the steamer top-heavy, and exposed to all the vicissitudes of the weather. Nor did there yet

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

exist any ship large enough to store in its hold this huge cocoon of iron, copper, and gutta-percha. No available ship could carry such a burden. At least two vessels would be needed, and these chief transports must be accompanied by others to render help in case of accidents. It was true that the British Government placed at the disposal of the cable-layers the *Agamemnon*, a big man-of-war which had been the flagship in the attack on Sevastopol; while the U.S. Government supplied the *Niagara*, a 5,000-ton frigate, one of the largest then afloat. But these two warships needed internal transformations so that each could store half of the interminable cable which was to unite two continents.

The main problem, however, was the cable itself. It had to be extraordinarily tough to resist the strain of its own weight while it was being submerged, and yet it had at the same time to be sufficiently flexible for the coiling and uncoiling. It must be capable of enduring the most formidable pressure, but must be as smooth and easily wound as a silken thread. It must be massive without being too bulky, strong and solid in construction but able to convey the slightest difference in electrical potential across a space of two thousand miles. The most trifling flaw in the long, long copper wires which were actually to convey the message inside the bulky protective and strengthening coats would ruin the whole enterprise.

Still, the venture was to be made. By day and by night the factories were at work, their wheels driven, not by steam-power alone, but by the tremendous energy of Cyrus Field. Mountains of iron and copper were incorporated into the cable; whole forests of rubber trees were robbed to supply the vast quantities of gutta-percha that were needed. In all, it contained 367,000 miles of copper wire, sufficient to girdle the earth a dozen times or stretch in one span from the earth to the moon. Nothing

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

more stupendous had been planned by petty human creatures since the building of the Tower of Babel.

THE START

For a year the wheels turned, incessantly spinning the long cable as it was stored away in the interiors of the two ships, until at length each of them had half of what was wanted. The cable-laying engines had been built, cumbrous machines provided with brakes and reversing gear, able to submerge the cable into the depths of the sea. The best engineers, electricians, and technicians, Morse among them, were on board, ready, throughout the cable-laying, to control the passage of the electric current and make sure throughout that all was well. Reporters and artists were taken along, that with words and pictures a record might be made of this voyage—the most exciting since those of Columbus and Magellan.

At length all was ready for the start, and though the sceptics were still in the majority, the British continued to show passionate interest in the undertaking. In the south-west of Ireland, off the coast of Kerry, lies the little island of Valentia, and in its harbour, on August 5, 1857, had assembled, not only the cable fleet, but hundreds of other craft large and small, laden with spectators who had come to watch the opening of the historic enterprise. They saw the end of the cable taken ashore and made fast to the soil of Europe. The departure had become the occasion of a great festivity. There were representatives of the British Government present; speeches were made; and a clergyman solemnly invoked a blessing. "Almighty God," he said, "Thou who hast spread the expanse of the heavens and controllest the movements of the sea, Thou whom the winds and waves obey, look down in Thy mercy upon Thy servants. . . . Graciously command that there shall be no hindrance,

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

no obstacle, to the completion of this mighty work." The onlookers cheered and waved acknowledgments. The cable fleet got under way. It steamed ahead, and the lovely coast of Ireland faded from sight. One of the boldest dreams ever conceived by Man was being realized.

MISADVENTURE

The original plan had been that the two warships *Agamemnon* and *Niagara* should proceed in company to an appointed spot in the middle of the Atlantic where the two halves of the cable should be united. Thence one of them was to steam westward to Newfoundland and the other eastward to Ireland. But, after further reflection, it was decided that this would be too hazardous and that it would be better to make one end fast to Europe and steam westward—for no one yet knew to how great a distance communications could be carried by a submarine cable.

It was to be the task of the *Niagara* to submerge the first section of the cable, from Valentia to the middle of the Atlantic. Slowly and carefully the American frigate proceeded with the uncoiling of the cable, as it was paid out into the depths of the sea. Slowly and regularly the machinery worked, making the hum familiar to all old seamen, the hum or rather the clank of an anchor-chain. After a few hours, all on board had come to take this noise as a matter of course, and they were hardly more conscious of it than a healthy man is of the beating of his heart.

On, on, westward across the sea, as the cable was steadily paid out. This adventure did not seem so adventurous after all. The electricians had a special room where, by means of the cable, they could continually keep in touch with Ireland. Although the coast

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

had long since vanished from sight, communications went on as merrily, as easily, as if a telegram were being sent from one European town to another a few miles away. The shallows had long since been traversed, and the steamer was now crossing the deep-sea plateau which stretches westward from Ireland. As regularly as sand in an hour-glass, the metal and rubber cable was being paid out, giving and receiving messages all the time.

Three hundred and fifty-three miles of cable had been laid, more than ten times the length of the cable between Dover and Calais. Two days and two nights had passed without incident. On the evening of August 8, Cyrus Field, who had been busily at work all day, had retired to rest. Then, of a sudden, the throb of the cable-laying engines ceased. As a sleeper on a night journey by train awakens the instant the train stops, as the miller starts up in his bed when the mill-wheels cease turning, so did everyone on board now awaken, jump out of bed, and make for the deck. The first glance at the paying-out machine showed that the cable had parted and that the broken end must be lying in the depths of the sea. There was no means of finding it, and still less any of bringing it again to the surface. The disaster had happened, the milk was spilt. A trifling flaw had destroyed the work of years. The bold but defeated adventurers had no recourse but to return to Europe, where their unhappy news was no news, since those on shore had been warned by the cessation of signals.

YET ANOTHER MISHAP

Cyrus Field, a man whose spirits nothing could dash, hero as well as man of business, drew up his balance-sheet. What stood on the debit side? Three hundred miles of cable, £100,000 of the shareholders' money, and, what was worse, a whole year lost. The cable-layers

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

could only count upon fine weather in summer, and the season was too advanced for a fresh start that year. Still, there was something to put on the credit side. A good deal of practical experience had been gained during this first attempt. Except for the unfortunate flaw, there was nothing wrong with the cable. That could be unwound and stored for the next expedition. But the cable-laying machines must be modified, for they had probably been responsible, or mainly responsible, for the catastrophe.

A year was spent, therefore, in making fresh preparations. On June 10, 1858, it was possible to begin again, with renewed courage and the old cable laden upon the same ships. Since electric communications with the shore had been kept up satisfactorily for three hundred miles, it was decided to return to the original plan, and lay the cable simultaneously eastward and westward from the middle of the Atlantic.

The first days of the new voyage were uneventful. Not until the ships were seven days out from Valentia was the actual laying to begin. At first all went as if on a pleasure trip. No use had yet been made of the cable-laying machinery, and there was little for anyone but the stokers to do, since the weather was fine, the sky cloudless, and the sea calm. On the third day, however, the captain of the *Agamemnon* grew uneasy. The glass was falling so rapidly that a storm was obviously brewing, and did in fact break out next day—a more violent one than any on board could remember. The *Agamemnon* had to bear the full brunt of the hurricane. A fine boat, which as flagship had been tried in many waters, she might have been expected to ride out the storm easily enough. Unfortunately, however, she had been remodelled for the cable-laying, and the heavy freight she now carried was not very judiciously disposed. Not, as in a freighter, could the weight be equably distributed

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

all through the hold, for most of the huge spool was in the very middle of the ship, so that when the sea became rough she pitched abominably, swinging like a huge pendulum. She rolled as well, to an angle of forty-five degrees, while the mountainous waves broke over her deck. This was laden with spare coal, and at length she shipped a sea which demolished the gigantic piles. Now fragments of coal descended like a huge hailstorm upon the unfortunate seamen, all of them already exhausted and many of them wounded. Some were scalded by an upset in the cook's galley. One man went off his head in a storm which lasted ten days, and already there was talk of lightening the ship by throwing part of the cable overboard. The captain, however, decided against this extreme measure, and he proved to be right. In the end, the *Agamemnon* weathered the storm and, though somewhat belated, turned up at the rendezvous, where she joined her consort, so that it seemed as if the pair could begin to lay the cable.

But now came an unwelcome discovery. The costly and sensitive freight, the cable with thousands of coils, had been injured by the incessant battering it had sustained. In several places there were twists and kinks, so that the gutta-percha coating had been frayed or torn. With very little confidence, an attempt was made to begin submerging the cable, but when about two hundred miles had been paid out a fracture took place, and the precious consignment thus plunged into the depths of the ocean. There was nothing for it but to return home, disappointed instead of triumphant.

THE THIRD VOYAGE

Pallid and anxious were the shareholders in London, already informed about this second mishap, as they awaited the arrival of their leader (and misleader), Cyrus

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

Field. Half the subscribed capital had been swallowed up by these two initial failures, with nothing accomplished, nothing done. Naturally most of them were inclined to cut their losses and go no farther. Such was the advice of the chairman of the meeting, who proposed that the remains of the cable should be unloaded and sold for what it would fetch. That would be the end of this crazy plan for bridging the Atlantic with an electric cable. The vice-chairman was of the same mind, and had already sent in his resignation, declaring that he would have no more to do with so preposterous an undertaking. But Cyrus Field, a tough-minded idealist, would not hear of defeat. The game was by no means lost, he declared; nothing was lost. The cable had admirably met the test put upon it; there was still enough to reach from shore to shore of the Atlantic; the fleet was ready; the crews were waiting. After the recent terrible storm there was good reason for expecting fine weather. "Courage, my friends, courage. Fortune favours the bold. Now is our chance for another venture."

The shareholders looked at one another dubiously. Were they to risk what remained of their capital at the summons of a man possessed? Field's invincible will overpowered all resistance, and they gave way. On July 17, 1858, five weeks after the beginning of the second attempt, the cable-laying fleet sailed from Valentia for the third time.

Now was confirmed a very old experience, that the most decisive happenings are apt to take place unnoticed. This time there were no boats laden with on-lookers, there was no cheering crowd on the shore, there was no commemorative banquet, there were no speeches, there was no clergyman to invoke God's blessing. Silently and secretly, as if upon a piratical raid, the ships set sail. But sea and sky were kindly. On the appointed day, July 28, eleven days after leaving the Irish coast, the

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

Agamemnon and the *Niagara* were at the appointed spot in the middle of the Atlantic, ready to begin their great task.

Strange was the sight. The ships were riding stern to stern. Between them stretched the cable whose coils were hidden in the bowels of each. They got under way without formality, without obvious interest on the part of either crew (for the men had all been disheartened by the previous failures), and the cable began to sink into the unplumbed depths of the Atlantic. By flags the *Agamemnon* and the *Niagara* exchanged farewell greetings as the former made for British shores and the latter for American. Though the distance between them steadily increased, between these two wandering points on the trackless sea, the cable kept them in touch with one another. For the first time in history two ships out of sight of one another could hold converse in defiance of winds and waves and spatial severance. Every two hours there came to each an electric signal out of the depths of the ocean, each being able to inform the other that, thanks to the persistently fine weather, the same stretch of miles had been covered. Thus day followed day; a second, a third, a fourth. On August 5 the *Niagara* announced the sight of Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, when one thousand and thirty miles of cable had been laid; and the *Agamemnon* was able to respond triumphantly the sighting of the Irish coast when one thousand miles of cable had been submerged. For the first time in history there was instantaneous communication between Europe and America. Only those on board the two ships, the few hundred men housed in a pair of wooden cockle-shells, knew as yet what had been achieved. The world at large, on both sides of the Atlantic, had practically forgotten the enterprise. There was no one to welcome the Argonauts on either shore, whether in Newfoundland or in Ireland. But the instant the new sub-

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

marine cable established contact with the telegraph wires on shore, humanity at large received tidings of the wonderful victory.

HOSANNA!

The news was all the more stupendous because it came like a flash of lightning from a clear sky. Almost at the same moment, during these early days of August, 1858, the New World and the Old were informed that success had been achieved. The effects were indescribable. *The Times*, usually so sober and restrained, announced in a leading article: "Since the discovery by Columbus, nothing has been done in any degree comparable to the vast enlargement which has thus been given to the sphere of human activity." The City was wildly excited. But the British expressions of delight paled when compared with the wild enthusiasm of America as soon as the news was made known. Business came to an end. The streets were crowded with questioning and vociferating persons; and betwixt night and morning Cyrus Field, hitherto practically unknown in his own country, had become a national hero. He was ranked with Franklin and Columbus. New York and a hundred other important towns were eager to see one whose resolution, whose persistence, had enabled him "to wed Young America to the Old World." Even now excitement had not reached a climax, for nothing had so far come to hand but the dry intelligence that the cable had been laid. But was Transatlantic communication actually established? Had success gone so far? The business metropolis of America, the whole country, was waiting to hear the first word across the seas. Everyone knew that Queen Victoria of England was to send the first message, the first congratulations, by cable, and hour after hour the eager Americans waited to hear them. But now day

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

followed day in silence, because, by an unlucky chance, the cable which crossed the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Newfoundland was out of gear. Not until late in the evening of August 16 did Queen Victoria's message reach New York.

It came too late for the last edition of that day's newspaper, so that the tidings could only be posted in the telegraph offices and on the newspaper buildings, where vast crowds assembled to read. Announcements were made in theatres and restaurants. Thousands who did not yet realize that the cable could antedate the swiftest steamer stormed Brooklyn Harbour, waiting far into the night to welcome the *Niagara* which, warship though she was, was now on a peaceful errand. Next day, August 17, in gigantic headlines, the newspapers announced: "The cable is in perfect working order - Everybody crazy with joy—Tremendous sensation throughout the city -Now's the time for a universal jubilee." An unexampled triumph was being commemorated, for never since the dawn of human history and human thought had words been instantaneously flashed across the sea. A royal salute announced that the President of the United States had answered Queen Victoria. No one doubted any longer. That evening New York and other towns glittered with lights and torches. Every window was illuminated, and the public rejoicings were hardly diminished by the unfortunate fact that the dome of the City Hall caught fire. Next day were fresh celebrations, for the *Niagara* had arrived, with Cyrus Field, the great hero, on board. In triumph, what was left of the cable was borne through the city, and the crew were welcomed. Manifestations went on day after day, to the southward as far as the Gulf of Mexico and to the westward as far as the Pacific, as if America had been celebrating her first discovery by Columbus.

But this did not suffice. The formal celebrations were

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

to be even more splendid than anything the New World had hitherto known. Preparations went on for a fortnight, and then, on August 31, 1858, such a triumph was given to Cyrus Field as no conqueror had ever received since the days of the Caesars. A procession had been organized, so long that it took six hours to pass any given spot. United States troops led the way through the beflagged streets, followed by the harmony societies, choirs, the fire-brigade, school children, veterans from the Mexican war. Everyone who could walk was afoot. Everyone who could sing raised his voice. There were three four-in-hands, one containing Cyrus Field, a second the captain of the *Niagara*, a third the President of the United States. Then came carriages filled with the Mayor of New York, State officials, and professors. Ceremonial addresses, banquets, torchlight processions followed; church bells were rung; cannon thundered; again and again tributes were paid to the New Columbus, the man who had united two worlds, the conqueror of space, he who at this moment was the most idolized person in America—Cyrus Field.

. . . AND "CRUCIFIXE"

This day, thousands of voices, millions of voices, joined in the acclamations. One voice only was stilled amid the rejoicings—that of the electric cable. Perhaps Cyrus Field was almost alone in being aware of the terrible truth that on this very day the Atlantic cable had ceased to work, after several days during which the signals transmitted had been confused and barely intelligible—the last flickers of an expiring spark. Few, very few, were aware of this; as far as America was concerned, only those telegraphists employed at the Newfoundland transmitting station, and these held their peace lest they should needlessly damp the popular

enthusiasm. But soon, throughout the United States, people became aware that there must be something wrong. America had expected that ample tidings would be flashed across the ocean depths. Instead there came no more than a few vague and finally indecipherable messages. Then a rumour spread that, in the impatient determination to establish a better connection, excessively strong currents had been used, and that these had completely destroyed a cable which was already inadequate for its task. Still, perhaps things could be put right. Alas, no. It could not be denied that the messages were growing more and more incomprehensible. At length, on September 1, to intensify the headache that followed the rejoicings, came a brief announcement that no messages whatever were being received from Great Britain.

Now there is nothing that people find more intolerable than such a disappointment, nothing that causes more fury than to find that over-enthusiastic expectations have been frustrated. Hardly had the news spread that the widely trumpeted cable had given out than enthusiasm for Cyrus Field was transformed into rage with the innocent offender. He had cheated a town, he had cheated a country, he had cheated the world. He had known long since that the cable was a failure, but had held his tongue while secretly unloading his shares at an immense profit. Soon still more ill-natured reports were bruited abroad, and among them the amazing calumny that the Transatlantic cable had never worked at all; that reports as to its successful functioning had been pure humbug; that the telegram from Queen Victoria was a fabrication. One message had, indeed, been transmitted, but only one. All the others had been imaginary amplifications, written up by the directors of the Atlantic Telegraph Company out of unintelligible signals. The affair became a scandal. Those who yesterday had re-

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

joiced most loudly were now most frenzied in their imprecations. New York, the whole country, was ashamed of its premature enthusiasm. Cyrus Field, who had just been acclaimed as a national hero, as Franklin's brother and Columbus's successor, was now stigmatized as the meanest of criminals. One day sufficed to work this change. Overwhelming was the defeat, vanished had public confidence, and, like the fabled Midgard Serpent, the useless cable lay in the dark unfathomed caves of ocean.

SIX YEARS OF SILENCE

For six years the forgotten cable lay useless in the dark unfathomed caves of ocean; for six years there was no instantaneous communication between the two continents, which for a brief hour had heard one another's heart-beats. *Europe and America had exchanged a few hasty words, but once again, as for thousands upon thousands of years, were separated each from the other by insuperable distances.* The boldest plan of the nineteenth century, which had seemed a reality, was once more a legend, a myth. No one dreamed of making a fresh essay. Forces had been paralysed, enthusiasm had been damped, by this overwhelming defeat. As far as America was concerned, interest was monopolized by the Civil War. In England committees met from time to time, but two years elapsed before they even reached the dry decision that the Transatlantic cable had been proved a practical possibility. No one thought of venturing further than this academic opinion and of trying to translate possibility into reality. For six years, therefore, the cable lay unheeded as any other gem of purest ray serene that the dark unfathomed caves of ocean might bear.

For six years, though but a twinkling of an eye in the

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

vast period of history, is as a thousand years in the development of so young a science as electricity. Year after year, month after month, new discoveries were made in this domain. Apparatus was continually being perfected, its application became more and more trustworthy. Telegraph wires spanned the continents of the Old World; the Mediterranean had been crossed by cable, connecting Africa and Europe. Year after year, therefore, the plan of spanning the ocean which divided Europe from America grew less and less fantastic. Inevitably the hour for its revival must come. The only thing wanting was the man who would animate the old scheme with fresh energy.

Suddenly the man arrived, but not a new one. The same man, animated by the same invincible faith and self-confidence; Cyrus Field, resurrected from oblivion, ostracism, and universal contempt. Having crossed the ocean for the thirtieth time, he reappeared in London, and was able to vivify the old concessions with new capital amounting to £600,000. Now, too, the leviathan he had dreamed of had become a fact, the *Great Eastern*, a ship which, in one bottom, could carry the huge freight, an enormous ship for those days with her two-and-twenty thousand tons displacement and four funnels, designed and built by that most enterprising of engineers, Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Moreover, by a marvellous piece of luck, in this year 1865 she was lying fallow, for she, like the Transatlantic cable, was in advance of her time. Within a couple of days she could be bought and orders given to outfit her for the expedition.

All was now easy which before had seemed difficult to the verge of impossibility. On July 23, 1865, the mammoth vessel left the Thames with a new cable on board. Even though her first attempt miscarried, the cable parting two days before the American coast was reached, and carrying with it to the bottom of the sea capital to

FIRST WORD ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

the time of £600,000, technicians by this time were not so readily discouraged as they had been at the time of the first attempt. The *Great Eastern* set sail again on July 13, 1866, and this time the submergence of the cable was a complete success, and the "Midgard Serpent" conveyed plain messages. A few days later the end of the 1865 cable was fished up and spliced, so that before long there were two cables functioning satisfactorily between the Old World and the New. The miracle of yesterday had become the commonplace of to-day, and ever since Europe and America have had two minds with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one. In both hemispheres the human mind is simultaneously present, united by the strength of its own creative energies. The world would be gloriously unified for all future ages by this victory over space and time, were it not that she is again and again seized with a frenzy which leads her to destroy her own magnificent achievements and seeks to annihilate herself by the very means which have given her mastery over the elements.

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE



THE CONQUEST OF THE EARTH

THE twentieth century looks out into a world that has yielded up most of its secrets. All the lands of the globe have been explored, all its waters charted. Regions which barely a generation ago slept in nameless obscurity are now made to serve Europe's needs; even to the sources of the Nile, so long in the finding, the steamships ply. The Victoria Falls, seen by European eyes for the first time less than a century ago, have now obediently to create electric power. That last refuge of savage nature, the valley of the Amazon, has been cleared; the girdle around the virgin land of Tibet has been pulled aside. The words "terra incognita," which are to be seen on ancient maps, have been effaced by the hand of the scientist.

Yet the exploratory will of man seeks fresh victories, sending divers to learn of the life in the ocean depths, while aloft in the skies the airmen study the ways of the limitless atmosphere.

Till yesterday, however, there were still two small spots on this globe of ours which had hitherto withstood all attacks. South Pole and North Pole, the backbone of Mother Earth, these two well-nigh non-existent, meaningless points which form as it were the axis upon which the planet has turned for countless ages, had preserved their maiden inviolability. Great barriers of ice protected this last wonder from men's eyes; winter, ever-

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE

lasting winter, was the watch-dog that kept the inquisitive at bay. Frost and storm made the walls impregnable; horror and danger breathed death and destruction to those who were bold enough to venture near.

For decades, one polar expedition followed another. None attained the goal. Somewhere, in its grave of ice, lies the body of that boldest of the bold, Andrée, who tried to fly over the North Pole in a balloon, and never returned. Every assault had been baffled by those walls of ice. Down to our own century, for millenniums, the Earth has here kept her secret from the passionate attacks of her children. Clean and virginal, the poles defied the curiosity of the world of men.

But the men of the new century stretch forth eager hands. They make new weapons in their laboratories, new armour against danger, and their avidity increases with opposition to their desires. They want to unveil every truth; in the very first decade of the new century they would fain discover what has been hidden to all their forefathers these many hundred years. To the courage of individual men has been superadded a rivalry between the nations, each craving to be the first to plant its flag in the desolate polar wastes. From every continent men set forth to the attack, and the outcome of those expeditions is eagerly awaited, for everyone knows that the poles are the last secrets of our planet. Peary and Cook start for the North Pole from the American continent. Two ships set sail for the South Pole: one of them carries the Norwegian, Amundsen; the other, an Englishman named Scott.

SCOTT

A captain in the British navy, one among many, with nothing special in his record to differentiate him from a hundred other men of his rank. His service had been

meritorious, he had taken part in Shackleton's expedition; but there had been no deed which could mark him as a hero. His face, judged by the photographs, is like that of thousands of his compatriots, showing a cool determination of character; a face free from plastic expression, petrified as it were by the inner concentration of the man's energies. The eyes are steely, the lips pressed firmly together. Not a trace of a romantic disposition, no gleam of merriment, can be seen in this countenance; it shows only resolution and practical good sense. His handwriting is just the writing of an Englishman, plain and unadorned, rapid and firm. His style is clear and unimpeachable, very moving in its record of the facts and yet as bare of flights of imagination as an official report. Scott writes English as Tacitus wrote Latin, squarely and without polish. The writing seems to be that of a man who has never dreamed, a fanatic for precision, a true son of the English race among which even genius crystallizes into the form of an enhanced sense of duty. Such a man as Scott has appeared over and over again in the annals of English history: such as he conquered India and many a nameless island in the archipelago; colonized vast tracts in Africa; overcame a world in arms. Always with the same iron energy, the same devotion to team-work, the same cold and reserved demeanour.

Before ever the deed is done one feels the steely hardness of the will. Scott means to finish what Shackleton had begun. He starts organizing an expedition; but his funds do not suffice. No matter! He sacrifices his fortune and runs up debts in the conviction of success. His young wife presents him with a son; he does not waver, but, like another Hector, he leaves the side of his Andromache. Friends and companions are found; no earthly power can now keep him back. The vessel which is to take the expedition to the edge of the polar

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE

sea is named *Terra Nova*. It is a strange ship, half Noah's ark with its great quantity of live-stock, and half laboratory with its thousand instruments and books. Everything that man can need for bodily or mental refreshment has to be brought into this empty, uninhabited land; and thus we find an amazing medley of primitive tools, outlandish furs, live-stock, alongside the most delicate of modern inventions and equipment. No less fantastic is the twofold object of the whole undertaking. It is to be an adventure, and yet one that has been planned with the precision of a business affair; a foolhardy excursion, prepared with all the arts of precaution; an infinity of exact calculation, against an even greater infinity of hostile chance.

On June 1, 1910, the *Terra Nova* sailed from England. At this time of year, England is at its best. The meadows are green and spangled with flowers; the sunlight falls soft and mellow athwart the land; the skies are clear. Those aboard the *Terra Nova* are deeply moved as the coast-line disappears. They know that they are bidding farewell to all this warmth and sweetness for years, and that some of the company are destined never to see these shores again. The British flag streams from the mast, and they comfort themselves with the thought that some day not so far distant this emblem will fly over the one masterless spot remaining on earth.

UNIVERSITAS ANTARCTICA

In January, 1911, after a short stay in New Zealand, they land at Cape Evans on the edge of the perpetual ice. Here they build a house, where they intend to pass the winter. December and January are the two summer months in that part of the world. This is the season of perpetual day, when the sun is powerful, unless obscured by clouds. It casts a metallic light over the pale land-

scapc. The walls of the house arc made of wood. So far the building is similar to those erected by earlier explorers. But the interior shows the progressiveness of the epoch. Whereas the earlier pioneers had to be content with the light afforded by flickering oil-lamps, to sit in the gloom, wearied by the sight of their own faces, depressed with the monotony of the sunless days, these men of the twentieth century have the whole world of new discoveries, of science, at their command. There is an acetylene gas plant which fills the house with a steady white light; a cinematographic apparatus to entertain them with pictures; a pianola to provide them with instrumental music; a gramophone that they may enjoy the human voice; a library containing the wisdom of the day. From one quarter comes the clatter of a typewriter; a cubicle is partitioned off to serve as a dark-room. The geologist has instruments wherewith to test the radio-activity of the rocks; the zoologist discovers new species of parasites upon the captured penguins; meteorological observations alternate with physical and chemical experiments. To each man is allotted a task for the coming months of darkness; and, thanks to a wise regulation of their several activities, isolated endeavour is made to serve the purposes of joint instruction. For, most evenings, this score of men entertain one another with lectures on their own special subjects, give university courses amid the pack-ice and the Antarctic frost; each tries to impart his own science to his companions, and in this exchange each acquires a wider outlook on the universe. The specialization of experts yields up something of its arrogant aloofness, so as to become comprehensible to the community. Amid a primeval world, alone in the infinitude of time, these comrades interchange the results of twentieth-century knowledge; and we mark, as it were, not only the passing of the hours, but the measured ticking of the seconds, on the timepiece

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE

of the world. It is moving to learn how these clever and earnest men of science enjoy their "Christmas" tree; what fun they get out of their journal, the *South Polar Times*; how little happenings—the advent of a whale, a pony's indisposition—become events; how the stupendous phenomena of nature—the aurora, the terrible cold, the immensity of the solitary wastes—become everyday affairs, customary, and no longer exciting.

Meanwhile they test themselves and their gear. They take a run in their motor sledges, they learn to ski, they train the dogs, they make a depot for the great journey. But the days pass very slowly till summer comes again and the ship will bring them letters from home. Little groups go out in the terrible winter weather to harden themselves for the coming journey, the tents are given a trial, experience is gained. Sometimes things go awry, but difficulty and danger steel their courage. When they come back from these excursions, suffering from frost-bite, extenuated with fatigue, they are welcomed with rejoicing, with glowing friendship, a warm fire; and the comfortable little home on the seventy-seventh parallel seems to them, after the privations they have just been through, the most heavenly spot on earth.

One day an expedition returns from the West with news that casts a gloom over the household. Amundsen is established in the Bay of Whales. Scott immediately realizes that his plans are now threatened, not only by frost and the perils it entails, but by the risk of being forestalled. "One thing only fixes itself definitely in my mind. The proper, as well as the wiser, course for us is to proceed exactly as though this had not happened. To go forward and do our best for the honour of the country without fear or panic." That is all. But what a sense of disappointed hope and anxiety the simple words convey. "Amundsen's plan is a very serious menace to ours. He has a shorter distance to the Pole by 60 miles."

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

The Norwegian's name occurs several times in the diary, always with this note of anxiety. Such entries culminate in the laconic words: "The worst has happened."

TO THE POLE

A watch is stationed at an observation point a mile or so from the house. Someone is always on duty at the little hut here, to watch the meteorological apparatus. Among these is an instrument for recording the first rays of sunlight after the long winter night. The skies have been aflame with the reflected light of the approaching sun, but the disc has not yet appeared above the horizon. At last one day the sun "shone on the lower foothills to the west. . . . It is grand to have daylight rushing at one." Only for an hour at first, but "it is glorious to be bathed in sunshine once more." Now the preparations for the great journey are intensified. Every moment of the summer season must be taken advantage of, this season which to us Europeans would seem the hardest and most virulent of winters.

On October 24 the motor sledges are sent off. Then come the sleds drawn by ponies and dogs. The trail is divided up into stages, and at every second stage a depot is made to provide the homeward journey with food, clothing, and, above all, petrolcum, that concentrated store of heat energy amid the unending ice.

The plans for the long trek are made in masterly fashion; every possible mishap is foreseen and provided for. And mishaps are not lacking. A few days after the start the motors break down and are abandoned in the snow. The ponies, too, do not hold out as well as had been hoped; and yet the animals did a great deal better than the mechanical haulage. In addition the poor beasts served another useful purpose, for when any of

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE

them had to be shot the carcass provided warm food for the dogs.

By November 1, 1911, the whole party had finally set out from winter quarters. Apart from those who had gone on ahead with the motors, they numbered thirty men all told. Gradually, detachment after detachment was sent back to the base; thus they advanced, twelve men, eight men—and the adventurous five at last were left to face the snowy waste alone, five little figures wandering through the desolate and unpeopled regions of a primitive world. Each man, muffled in furs and other garments of outlandish cut, with no feature of the face showing save the beard and the eyes, his hands in uncouth mits, leads a pony by the halter. The sledge is heavily laden. This picture is repeated twenty times, making a procession of black dots in the unending whiteness. As the detachments are sent home, as the ponies are killed, the procession shrinks, till the men begin to do the heavy work themselves. They pass the "night" under canvas; while the ponies last they make sheltering walls of snow to protect the beasts from the inclemencies of the weather. Next "day," forward once more, monotonously, comfortless; on through the icy air which for the first time in countless millenniums now fills the lungs of men.

Troubles thicken. The weather is bad, they cannot cover the distances they had hoped; every day they lose on the march is a blow to them, since they know that, from another angle, another party, a rival party, is making for the same goal. The tiniest mishap is a menace to their safety. A dog runs away, a pony is off its feed; immediately they are seized with alarm, for in this desert values are enhanced a thousandfold, no living thing can be replaced. On the feet of one single pony hangs the issue of life or death; a cloudy sky, a storm of wind or snow, may postpone action for ever. The question of

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

health is vital; one man suffers from snow-blindness, another from frost-bite; the ponies get weaker as their rations are cut down, and at last they are "quite done, one and all." On reaching the Beardmore Glacier the remaining ponies have to be shot, poor beasts. They had played their parts wonderfully well, had endeared themselves to their human friends during the eighteen months of life together; each had become an individual known by a special name; each had experienced a hundred kindnesses from its human brother. Camp 31 received the name of Shambles Camp.

From this place three sleds start southward on December 10, over the "appalling surface" of the glacier. Next day the dogs are sent home with their driver, bearing a message. The marches become shorter, the pulling heavier; the weather baulks the men's efforts, the trail makes them footsore. On December 20, Scott "told off the people to return to-morrow" to the base. "All are disappointed." On December 30, the remaining parties reach the eighty-seventh parallel, only one degree short of Shackleton's extremest point of advance. On January 4 three further men say farewell: they, too, are ordered back to headquarters. They take their disappointment with becoming fortitude, and behave like men, though "poor old Crean wept and even Lashly was affected." Two little black points, one travelling northward towards home, the other southward into the unknown! They turn from time to time to catch a last glimpse. Then both spots vanish from each other's ken. The last supporting party has disappeared. Now the five are alone, marching into the infinite; the five elect: Scott, Bowers, Oates, Wilson, and Evans.

THE SOUTH POLE

The records of the last few days before the party

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE

reaches the goal are full of restless disquietude. Hope fluctuates. "We go little over a mile and a quarter an hour now—it is a big strain as the shadows creep slowly round from our right through ahead to our left. What lots of things we think of on these monotonous marches! What castles one builds now hopefully that the Pole is ours." Hope springs eternal . . .! The undertone of emotion becomes plainer as the record advances; we feel it in the constant reiteration of the distance yet to be covered. "Little more than 120 miles from the Pole. . . . There is no doubt if things remained as they are we could not keep up the strain of such marching for long." How weary these splendid adventurers are getting. A day or two later we read: "Only 85 miles (geog.) from the Pole, but it's going to be a stiff pull *both ways* apparently." Again: "About 74 miles from the Pole—can we keep this up for seven days? It takes it out of us like anything." On January 12 we have a jubilant note: "Only 63 miles (geog.) from the Pole to-night. We ought to do the trick." And next evening: "Only 51 miles from the Pole to-night. If we don't get to it we shall be d—d close." On January 14 we read the plain statement: "We are less than 40 miles from the Pole." Next evening: "Only 27 miles from the Pole. We *ought* to do it now." The reader is gripped to the heart by the intensity of feeling revealed in these simple, compact records; how tense the hope, how taut the nervous tension of these impatient and yearning men. The goal is so near; their hands are already stretched out to unveil the ultimate secret of Mother Earth. One more effort, and the prize is theirs.

JANUARY 16

"We started off in high spirits in the afternoon, feeling that to-morrow would see us at our destination." They

had set out earlier than usual that morning. Driven onward by the impatience of desire, they had crept from their sleeping-sacks the earlier to behold the beauty they were questing. That morning they had covered seven and a half miles. They had been under way about two hours in the afternoon march when "Bowers' sharp eyes detected what he thought was a cairn; he was uneasy about it." Half an hour later "he detected a black speck ahead." No one utters the thought which sweeps through each man's mind. They all know it cannot be "a natural snow feature." They try to argue themselves into other beliefs. Like Robinson Crusoe endeavouring to persuade himself that the footprint is not that of a stranger but his own, they tell themselves it is a crevasse, or, maybe, a mirage. They come nearer, every nerve on the stretch.

At last the tension breaks. They know the truth. "We marched on, found that it was a black flag tied to a sledge bearer; nearby the remains of a camp; sledge tracks and ski tracks going and coming and the clear traces of dogs' paws—many dogs. This told the whole story. The Norwegians have forestalled us and are first at the Pole." The amazing has happened. For countless millenniums no human foot has trodden this icy waste, nor mortal eye looked upon this spot, and now, within a fortnight, a molecule of time in the infinitude of time, the place is twice discovered. One month too late in all the millions of months, the second discoverer of the South Pole arrives. But the second in the field in such a circumstance counts as nothing, the first as everything.

"It is a terrible disappointment, and I am very sorry for my loyal companions. Many thoughts come. . . ." All the hardship, all the endeavour, the hopes of weeks, of months, of years, vain and useless! "The worst has happened," writes Scott in his diary, "all the day-dreams must go." None of them sleep much after the shock of discovery. On January 17: "The Pole. Yes, but under

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE

very different circumstances from those expected." They have "a horrible day," damp, cold, and comfortless. "Great God! this is an awful place and terrible enough for us to have laboured to it without the reward of priority." He cannot see the landscape through the rosy spectacles of a conqueror, and it seems to him bleak and desolate in the extreme: "There is very little that is different from the awful monotony of past days." This is all Robert Falcon Scott has to say about the South Pole. What they find there is not a product of nature, but a thing made by the hands of men: a tent. Amundsen's tent, flying the Norwegian flag. The bunting streams impudently and triumphantly in the breeze. In the tent is a note addressed to the unknown who is to be second in the field, asking the finder to forward a letter to King Haakon. Scott accepts the trust loyally, and sticks the letter in his wallet. He will be witness before the world to a deed which he had hoped he himself would perform!

"We carried the Union Jack about three-quarters of a mile north of us and left it on a piece of stick as near as we could fix it. . . . Well, we have turned our backs now on the goal of our ambition and must face our 800 miles of solid dragging—and good-bye to most of the day-dreams!" The wind blows hard in their rear, and Scott writes prophetically that he is anxious about the return journey.

THE COLLAPSE

While approaching the Pole the compass has guided them, but on the return march things are otherwise. They have to keep constant watch that they do not stray from their outward tracks, lest they should miss their depots where food, clothing, and warmth in the shape of petroleum, await them. Should they stray from the

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

path, their fate is certain. Their bodies are less springy than on the outward march, when they were still full of the chemical energy supplied by ample feeding.

In addition, their wills are no longer steeled to the task. During the southward journey their spirits had been buoyed up with the hope of success; now they are merely endeavouring to save themselves alive; they foresee an inglorious homecoming, which, in their hearts of hearts, they perhaps look forward to with dread rather than with longing.

The record in the diary makes increasingly terrible reading. The weather remains inclement, winter has returned prematurely, the snow is soft and balls under their shoes, the frost searches out the weak spots in their weary bodies. Every time the travellers successfully take up the old tracks or come upon one of their depots, a note of exultation creeps into the narrative, their hopes revive: "A great piece of luck." And again: "To our joy we saw the red depot flag." Nor does their intellectual heroism wane; science must be served even amid such amazing hardships. So we read: "Bowers got another rating sight to-night—it was wonderful how he managed to observe in such a horribly cold wind." Or again, they will go out of their way "to visit rock," obtaining "several specimens, all of much the same type, a close-grained granite rock which weathers red." They camp "and spend the rest of the day geologizing" among the sandstone cliffs which carry coal seams. In the latter they find "several plant impressions," "beautifully traced leaves in layers," and many other interesting specimens which they drag along with them on the sledge.

Gradually, however, their courage is sapped by all their trials. We read of further foot troubles from frost-bite, of strained ligaments, of snow-blindness; they are all emaciated by hard work and short commons. At last Evans gives them serious anxiety. He has had a fall and

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE

slight concussion. "A rather trying position. Evans has broken down in brain, we think." He stops the march on some trivial excuse; he drops behind and comes up with the party "very slowly." One afternoon he fails to appear, and his four companions start back on ski to search for him. "I was the first to reach the poor man and shocked at his appearance; he was on his knees with clothing disarranged, hands uncovered and frostbitten, and a wild look in his eyes." His speech is slow, and he thinks he must have fainted. "He showed every sign of collapse . . . was practically unconscious, and when we got him into the tent quite comatose." On February 17, a few hours' march from Shambles Camp, Petty Officer Edgar Evans, R.N., "died quietly at 12.30 a.m."

The remaining quartet plod forward. But fresh troubles crowd upon them. On reaching a depot one afternoon they find "store in order except shortage of oil." They will, therefore, "have to be very saving with fuel," and fuel is their only means of fighting the frost. They are "a little despondent," or, again, "somewhat despondent"; "the fuel shortage is an anxiety"; the weather is "cold, very cold. Nothing dries and we get our feet cold too often"; "fuel is woefully short." Oates' feet are very bad indeed. It is "desperately cold," and on March 2 they arrive at the depot to find a further "shortage of oil."

Anxiety is now no longer hinted at. It finds expression in words. The reader feels that Scott is making every effort to write lightly of the horror that is closing round them, and that the men among themselves "are unendingly cheerful." But again and again the cry will out. "We are in a *very* queer street"; "God help us, we can't keep up this pulling"; "we are in a very tight place indeed, but none of us despondent *yet*, or at least we preserve every semblance of good cheer, but one's heart sinks as the sledge stops dead"; and then the ter-

rible realization, "Providence to our aid! We can expect little from man."

Nevertheless, they plod on, hope dead in their hearts, their teeth set. Oates goes lamier, he is unable to pull, and sits on the sledge when the others go track-hunting. "He is wonderfully plucky, as his feet must be giving him great pain." The poor man knows that he has become a terrible hindrance. At last Wilson, the doctor of the expedition, hands out the means for ending their troubles—30 opium tablets apiece—while Wilson himself is left with a tube of morphine. On March 16 or 17, Scott has "lost track of dates," Oates proposes that they should leave him in his sleeping-bag, and give themselves a last chance. "That we could not do, and induced him to come on"; yet they all know that the "Soldier" is the main impediment to their progress. The sick man makes a few miles with them; sleeps with them in camp, hoping not to wake.

"But he woke in the morning. . . . It was blowing a blizzard. He said, 'I am just going outside and may be some time.' He went out into the blizzard and we have not seen him since. . . . We knew that poor Oates was walking to his death, but though we tried to dissuade him, we knew it was the act of a brave man." None of them venture to shake him by the hand as he goes, their respect for his privacy forbids it; but they know that their comrade, Lawrence E. G. Oates, Captain 6th Inniskilling Dragoons, has gone like a hero to meet his death.

Three weary and exhausted men are now all that is left of the gallant little company. They constantly talk of fetching through, but not one of them believes it in his heart. An obscure instinct spurs them forward, to fight to the finish, to die in their tracks. On March 21 they get to within eleven miles of the depot, but a blizzard is blowing and they dare not leave the tent. There they are prisoned during nine days, each night

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE

hoping that the morrow may bring an improvement in the weather. Their food gives out, they have no more fuel, the thermometer stands at 40° below zero. "Every day we have been ready to start for our depot 11 miles away, but outside the door of the tent it remains a scene of whirling drift. I do not think we can hope for any better things now. We shall stick it out to the end, but we are getting weaker, of course, and the end cannot be far." They decide that the end shall be a natural one, that they will face death with the same proud courage with which they have faced all other vicissitudes. They creep into their sleeping-bags, and die there peacefully, as we know from the attitudes in which they were found eight months later. Wilson and Bowers have their bags closed over their heads. Scott must have survived the others. He had thrown back the flaps of his sleeping-bag and had opened his coat. Then, with the bodies of his friends beside him, he wrote and wrote, until the pencil slipped from his dying hand. They found him with his arm flung across Wilson.

LETTERS FROM THE DYING

Few scenes can be compared for simple grandeur and pathos with the closing scene in that tent amid the silent wilderness of snow, with the blizzard raging outside. Scott's thoughts to the last were for others rather than himself; there, amid the ice and snow where no human voice had been heard before, he writes his message to his fellow-countrymen, a message which must not alone stir the heart of every Englishman, but must strengthen the bonds of brotherhood between nation and nation. All who have crossed his path through life, who have felt with him the ties of love, loyalty, and friendship, pass before his eyes and receive a last word from him. In the hour of his death, his fingers stiff and cold,

Captain Scott writes letters to the living whom he has loved.

These letters make wonderful reading. Everything petty has been transmuted by the awful presence of death, and the crystalline purity of the atmosphere in which they were written seems to have penetrated them through and through. They are addressed to individuals, but they speak to the whole of mankind. They were written in time, but the message they convey will live for all eternity.

He writes to his wife, confiding their son to her, warning her to "guard him against indolence. Make him a strenuous man. I had to force myself into being strenuous as you know—had always an inclination to be idle." Within an ace of his death, he likes to recall his own determination. "What lots and lots I could tell you of this journey. How much better has it been than lounging in too great comfort at home."

His desire to bring consolation to others in their sorrow is never more conspicuous than in his affectionate letters to Mrs. Wilson, the wife of "Bill," and to Mrs. Bowers, "Birdie's" mother. He wishes them to know how pluckily each bore his troubles, how cheerily each met his end, "the best comrades and the staunchest of friends."

To Sir J. M. Barrie he writes a word of farewell. "More practically, I want you to help my widow and my boy—your godson. We are showing that Englishmen can still die with a bold spirit, fighting it out to the end. It will be known that we have accomplished our object in reaching the Pole, and that we have done everything possible, even to sacrificing ourselves in order to save sick companions. I think this makes an example for Englishmen of the future." A manly restraint, a spiritual reticence, glows from the final words he adds to this letter to Barrie—to whom he can only write thus un-

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE

reservedly because he knows he is dying. "I never met a man in my life whom I admired and loved more than you, but never could I show you how much your friendship meant to me, for you had much to give and I nothing."

His last letter, perhaps the most beautiful of all, is a Message to the Public. He feels in duty bound to give an account of his stewardship, to tell his fellow-countrymen that the "causes of the disaster are not due to faulty organization, but to misfortune in all risks which had to be undertaken." He enumerates the untoward events which had to be fought, and, in words made additionally poignant by the circumstances, he appeals to his countrymen "to see that those who depend on us are properly cared for." His last thought is still of others: "Had we lived, I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman." He is superbly unconcerned as to his own death, his last words, written in the journal, being: "For God's sake look after our people."

Here the record ends. The pencil had slipped from his frozen grasp. The hope that these dying messages might be found beside his body and conveyed to England, there to encourage others, had made him persevere in his heroic efforts till he died. Inside the cover of one of Scott's notebooks is the following entry: "Diary should be sent to my wife." But his faltering hand had at the last struck out the word "wife" and substituted "widow."

THE ANSWER

Meanwhile, in the hut at headquarters, Scott's comrades were awaiting the polar party's return. At first all were full of hope; but gradually anxiety grew more and more acute as the time for return became seriously over-

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

due. Twice were parties with dog teams sent out to reconnoitre and bring aid; each time the fury of the elements drove the expeditions home. Winter drew on, and they were forced to stay at the base, doing their best to keep fit and useful during the dark months. But they knew they were living in the shadow of a great catastrophe. A pall of ice and snow kept the secret of Scott's fate during these winter months. With the coming of the Antarctic spring, they made ready for the southward journey in the hope of at least securing the bodies of their friends. By October 29, 1912, everything was ready for the start. On the morning of November 12 the tent was discovered, and inside the tent the bodies of the three men. They found the diaries and the letters. Then they buried their heroic dead beneath a mighty snow cairn upon which was placed a rough cross, a lonely memento of the dead men's deeds in the desolation of white.

But their brave deeds are destined to have a glorious resurrection, for which our modern technical achievements must be thanked. The relief expedition, having brought the gear back to headquarters, proceeded to overhaul the find. The photographic plates are developed, and once again Scott and his comrades are seen at the Pole where only they and the members of Amundsen's expedition have of all mankind hitherto set foot. In February, 1913, the cables flash tidings to the homeland; an astonished and admiring world reads his last letters and the extracts from his diary; the King joins in the tribute to his memory by attending the memorial service in St. Paul's Cathedral.

What had seemed sterile, bears fruit; apparent failure makes a strenuous appeal to mankind, spurring on to new energy, to unparalleled endeavour, towards the unattainable; a heroic death gives a splendid impetus to intensified life; disaster generates a will to climb the

QUEST OF THE SOUTH POLE

unclimbable. A lucky hazard, an easily won success, can serve only to inflame ambition; whereas nothing uplifts the hearty so gloriously as the overthrow of one of our fellow-men by the invincible might of destiny. That has always been the most impressive of tragedies, sung again and again by the poets, and shaped ever anew by the forces of life.

THE SEALED TRAIN



THE MAN WHO LODGED AT THE COBBLER'S

SWITZERLAND, the little island of peace, whose coasts were lashed on all sides by the breakers of the World War, was, during the years 1915, 1916, 1917, and 1918, uninterruptedly the scene of an exciting detective novel. In the swagger hotels the envoys of the belligerent powers, who a year before had played bridge together on the most friendly terms and had exchanged invitations to dinner, now passed one another without a greeting as if they were strangers. From their suites issued a train of inconspicuous figures—delegates, secretaries, attachés, men of business, ladies veiled or unveiled—but engaged, one and all, upon secret commissions. Below were driving fine motor-cars decorated with foreign insignia, and when they pulled up it was to disgorge industrialists, journalists, virtuosi, or persons who professed to be travelling for amusement. But in nearly every case they had the same commission: to gather information, to spy out the land. The very porters who showed such people up, the servant-maids who swept the rooms, were likewise bribed to watch and to listen. Everywhere the organizations were vying with one another: in the inns, the boarding-houses, the post-offices, the cafés. What passed as propaganda was more than half espionage; treason wore the mask of love; and behind the declared occupation of most of these hurried visitors there lurked a second or third which was unacknowledged. Everything was reported, everything

THE SEALED TRAIN

supervised. Scarcely a German of any standing could set foot in Zürich without a report of his coming being sent instantly to Bern, and an hour later to Paris. Whole volumes of reports, true or otherwise, were sent daily by agents great and small to the attachés, and were passed on by these to their chiefs. The walls were as transparent as glass, the telephones were tapped; from waste-paper baskets and blotting-pads correspondence was scdulously reconstructed: and so crazy became the pandemonium, that many of those engaged in it ceased to know, at last, whether they were hunters or hunted, spies or bespied, traitors or betrayed.

Only concerning one foreigner in Switzerland was little reported during those days, perhaps because he was so inconspicuous, never entered a posh hotel, never sat in a coffee-house or attended a propagandist meeting, but lived in retirement with his wife at the cobbler's where they lodged. His rooms were in the Spiegelgasse, close to the Limmat, in the second storey of one of the strongly built gabled houses of the Old Town, begrimed, partly by age, partly by fumes from the little sausage-factory which was at work beneath the windows. His housemates were a baker's wife, an Italian, an Austrian actor; and they knew little more of him (since he was uncommunicative) than that he was a Russian with an almost unpronounceable name. Perhaps the cobbler's wife, the hostess, knew more than the others—that he had been for many years a refugee, and was in poor circumstances, having no lucrative job. All this was plain enough from the exiguous meals and threadbare clothing of the two Russians, whose whole possessions hardly filled the battered trunk with which they had arrived.

The man, short and thickset, was by no means striking in appearance, and plainly wished to remain unobserved. He shunned society; his fellow-lodgers rarely had a

glimpse of his obscure but sharp and narrow eyes; and very few visitors came to see him. Regularly, day after day, he went to the public library every morning at nine, and stayed there till noon, which closed the morning spell. By ten past twelve he was back at home, to leave at ten to one and be among the first to reach the library again. There he stayed till six o'clock. But since the agents of the various belligerents in the Confederacy paid heed only to the talkative, and did not know that it is invariably the lonely, who read much and learn much, that are most dangerous, are most likely to revolutionize the world, they wrote no reports about this unnoticeable man who lodged at the cobbler's. Nor was much known about him in socialist circles, except that in London he had been editor of an unimportant little periodical which was of a revolutionary trend and circulated scantily among the Russian refugees; that before leaving St. Petersburg he had been leader of a faction whose name, like his own, was unpronounceable; that he spoke harshly and contemptuously of the most respected members of the Socialist Party, declaring their methods to be wrong-headed; that he was unapproachable, cantankerous, and unconciliatory. Naturally, therefore, they bothered about him very little. The meetings which he summoned now and again in the evenings at a small working-class café were attended by only a few persons, fifteen or twenty at most, and young as a rule. The wilful fellow was pigeon-holed as one of the numerous Russian refugees who sharpened their wits with much tea and endless discussion. How could the obstinate little man be important? At any rate there were not as many as three dozen in Zürich who knew the name of Vladimir Ilich Ulyanoff, the lodger at the cobbler's. Had one of the fine cars which in those days were speeding from embassy to embassy chanced to run over him in the street and cut short his life prematurely, the world-at-

THE SEALED TRAIN

large, too, would never have heard of him under the name either of Ulyanoff or Lenin.

FULFILMENT . . .

One day—it was March 15, 1917—the librarian at Zurich was a little surprised. Nine had struck, and the place of the most punctual of all the readers was untenanted. Half-past nine came, ten o'clock came. Still the indefatigable reader had not come, and would come no more. For when he was on the way that morning a friend had accosted him, nay overwhelmed him, with the news that the Revolution had broken out in Russia.

At first Lenin would not believe the tidings. It came like a clap of thunder. Then, with quick, short strides, he made for the kiosk on the lake front, where, and outside the newspaper office, he waited hour after hour, day after day. Yes, it was true, became more gloriously true as time sped by. At first it seemed to be nothing more than a palace revolution, or a mere change of ministry. No, the Tsar had abdicated; a provisional Government had been appointed; there was to be a Duma; liberty had come to Russia; an amnesty for all political prisoners. This is what he had been dreaming of for years. All that he had worked for during two decades—in secret societies, in prison, in Siberia, in exile—had at length come to pass. As if by magic it appeared that the millions of dead who had fallen in this war had, after all, not died in vain. They were not men who had been fruitlessly slain. They were martyrs on behalf of the new realm of freedom, justice, and perpetual peace; the new realm that would be installed. As if intoxicated was the man who up till now had been icily clear, a cold and calculating visionary. Like him, too, clamoured and jubilated the hundreds of other Russians who occupied narrow quarters in Zürich and

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

Geneva, in Lausanne and Bern. These joyful tidings meant that they would be able to go home. Without forged passports, without assumed names, without risking their lives, they would be able to re-enter what had been the realm of the Tsar. They would return as free citizens of a free country. Quickly they began to get their scanty goods packed, for the newspapers had published Gorki's laconic wire: "Come home all." In every direction letters and telegrams were exchanged: come home, go home, get together, unite. Once more they could openly devote themselves to the cause which had allured them since the first conscious hour of their lives, the cause of the Russian Revolution.

. . . AND DISAPPOINTMENT

But in a few days came consternating news. The Russian Revolution, the coming of which had uplifted their hearts as if with eagles' pinions, was not the revolution of which they had dreamed, was not the Russian Revolution at all. It had been nothing more than a palace rising against the Tsar, a rising fomented by British and French diplomatists, whose aim was to prevent Nicholas from making a separate peace with Germany. It was not the revolution of the people—which wanted peace, indeed, but also to establish its own rights. It was not the revolution for which the Russian refugees had lived and were prepared to die; it was an intrigue of the war parties, of the imperialists and the generals, who wished to pursue their plans unhindered. Lenin and his friends speedily became aware that the invitation to return did not apply to those among the refugees who wanted a genuine, a radical, a Marxian revolution. Milyukoff and the other liberal leaders had already issued orders that they were not to be re-admitted. Whereas the moderates, such socialists as

Plehanoff, whose services could be relied upon for the prolongation of the war, were most amiably sent upon British torpedo-boats to St. Petersburg, with guards of honour, Trotsky was detained in Halifax and the other revolutionists were held up at the frontiers. In all the Entente countries black lists had been sent to the frontiers containing the names of those who had taken part in the Congress of Zimmerwald. Vainly did Lenin dispatch telegram after telegram to St. Petersburg. They were intercepted or left unanswered. What was unknown in Zürich or elsewhere in Western Europe was known very well in Russia—that Vladimir Ilich Lenin was strong, energetic, far-sighted, and dangerous to his adversaries.

Boundless was the disappointment of the impotent refugees. For many years, at meetings in London, Paris, and Vienna, they had been considering in every detail the strategy of the Russian Revolution. For decades in their periodicals they had discussed, on the theoretical and practical planes, the difficulties, the dangers, the possibilities of their schemes. Lenin himself, throughout life, had devoted most of his time to this one topic, revising the plans of the Revolution again and again until a definitive formulation had been achieved. Now, while he was pent up in Switzerland, his revolution was to be diluted and frittered away by others, the hallowed notion of setting the Russian people free was to be debased to the service of foreign nations and foreign interests. By a singular analogy Lenin had at this time to suffer what had been the sad fate of Hindenburg during the opening phases of the war. For forty years Hindenburg had manoeuvred and played the war-game with an eye to the Russian campaign, and then, when war broke out, was compelled to stay at home in mufti and move little flags on the map as he registered the gains and marked the blunders of the generals on active service. Under a similar stress Lenin, usually a hard-shelled realist, turned

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

over in his mind the most foolish, most fantastic dreams. Could he not hire an aeroplane, and thus get across Germany or Austria? The idea was crazy. Could he not make his way through one country or the other with the help of a forged passport? The first man who offered to help him in this way proved to be a spy. Wilder and more absurd became his fancies. He wrote to Sweden asking for a Swedish passport, intending to feign dumbness lest his tongue should give him away. Of course after turning over such preposterous schemes in the night-watches, he would, when day dawned, recognize them to be impracticable and insane. But by day as well as by night he remained convinced that somehow or other he must get back to Russia. He must transform the Russian Revolution into his own revolution instead of allowing it to be someone else's, must make it a genuine revolution instead of a purely political semblance. He must get back to Russia, soon, and no matter at what cost.

THROUGH GERMANY? YES OR NO?

Switzerland is encircled by Italy, France, Germany, and Austria. Across the Allied countries the way was barred to Lenin because he was a revolutionist, and across Germany and Austria because he was a Russian, was one of the subjects of an enemy power. Yet, by the absurdity of the situation, he had more reason to expect friendliness from the Germany of Emperor William than from the Russia of Milyukoff or the France of Poincaré. When the United States was on the point of taking up arms against her, Germany needed peace with Russia at all hazards, so that a revolutionist who might embarrass the British and French ambassadors in St. Petersburg was a person to regard with favour.

But for Lenin grave responsibilities would be involved

THE SEALED TRAIN

by opening negotiations with imperial Germany, a country which in his writings he had a hundred times threatened and reviled. By all accepted moral standards it would obviously be treasonable to set foot in war-time and travel across an enemy land by permission and with the approval of its general staff. Lenin must have been fully aware that by such a course of action he would compromise his party and his cause, would make himself suspect by being sent to Russia as a hireling of the German Government; and that if he should succeed in carrying out his wish to secure immediate peace for Russia his name would be inscribed in history as that of the man who had robbed his country of the fruit of victory. It was natural, therefore, that not merely the half-hearted revolutionists among the Russian refugees, but most even of those who were of his own way of thinking, should have been outraged when he announced his determination to adopt, in case of need, this dangerous and compromising method. Angrily they pointed out that through the instrumentality of the Swiss Social Democrats negotiations were afoot for the return of the Russian revolutionists by the legitimate and neutral way of an exchange of prisoners. Lenin knew that this plan would be insufferably tedious, that the Russian authorities would adopt all possible wiles in order to procrastinate indefinitely—at a time when every day, every hour, was of vital importance. He kept his eyes fixed on the end to be reached, whilst the others, less realist and less audacious, shrank from a scheme which by prevailing standards was treasonable. Lenin swallowed his scruples, and, defying counter-arguments, took the law into his own hands to open negotiations with the German Government.

THE PACT

Just because Lenin knew what he proposed would be

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

a challenging step and would attract much attention, he set to work as openly as possible. On his instructions the Swiss trade-union secretary, Fritz Platten, applied to the German ambassador, who had previously had dealings with the Russian émigrés, and stated Lenin's terms. This obscure refugee, as if foreseeing the authority that would soon be his, did not approach the German Government with a petition, but bluntly announced the terms on which he and his associates would be willing to accept a German authorization to cross the enemy land. The railway carriage in which they would travel was to have extra-territorial rights. There was to be no inspection of passports or persons on entering or leaving Germany. The travellers would themselves pay their fares at the customary rates. None of them would leave the carriage either upon orders from the Germans or upon their own initiative. Romberg, the ambassador, promptly sent on the application to headquarters. Without a qualm Ludendorff endorsed it, though his *War Memories* contain not a word about a decision which was to prove of greater historical importance than any other of his life. The ambassador, even now, vainly tried to secure modifications in the wording of the pact, which Lenin had of set purpose phrased so ambiguously that not only Russians but Radek (an Austrian) would be able to join the travellers uncontrolled. The fact was that the German Government, no less than Lenin, was in a hurry, the United States having declared war on April 5.

At noon, therefore, on April 6, Fritz Platten received the memorable missive: "Matters arranged as desired." On April 9, 1917, at half-past two, a small body of ill-dressed persons carrying their own luggage set out from the Zähringer Hof restaurant for Zurich station. They numbered thirty-two in all, women and children included. Of the men, only Lenin, Zinovieff, and Radek became famous. Having eaten a modest luncheon, they

THE SEALED TRAIN

jointly signed a document stating they had learned from the *Petit Parisien* of the Russian provisional Government's determination to treat as traitors any who should come back to Russia by way of Germany. The manuscript further declared that the signatories accepted full responsibility for the journey and approved the terms. Having signed, they quietly and resolutely set out upon a journey which history was to make momentous.

Their arrival at the station attracted no attention. No newspaper reporters and no photographers were present. No one in Switzerland knew anything about Herr Ulyanoff, who, in a squash-hat, a much-worn suit, and hobnailed boots (which he wore till the party reached Sweden), as member of a band of baggage-laden men, women, and children, silently and inconspicuously sought a place in the train. There was nothing to distinguish them from the countless refugees—Serbians, Ruthenians, or Rumanians—that were often to be seen in Zürich station sitting upon their wooden boxes and snatching a rest while on their way to Geneva and beyond. The Swiss Labour Party, disapproving the journey, had sent no representative. Only a few Russians had come: some to bid farewell; some to bring what means they could spare, and a little food for the travellers; some to send greetings to friends at home; some still hoping at the last hour to dissuade Lenin from "his preposterous, his criminal undertaking." But his decision was irrevocable. At 3.10 the guard whistled, and the wheels turned as the train started for Gottmadingen, the station on the German frontier. It was 3.10, and since then the world-clock has kept different time.

THE SEALED TRAIN

Millions of destructive shots were fired in the World War—the mightiest projectiles hitherto designed, and

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

having the longest range yet known. But not one of them was so fateful and far-reaching as the train that was about to start across Germany from the Swiss frontier, freighted with the most dangerous, the most determined, revolutionists of the century, on the way to St. Petersburg, where they would shatter the existing order.

On the rails in Gottmadingen station stood this unique projectile, a coach of second and third class, in which the women and children occupied the second class, the men the third. Chalk-marks upon the ground indicated a neutral zone, the territory of the Russians, as against the department of the two German officers who accompanied this transport of living high-explosive. The train moved on without incident through the night. Only in Frankfort did German soldiers assemble, having heard that some Russian revolutionists were on their way through Germany; and once the German Social Democrats tried to communicate with the travellers, but were refused access. Lenin knew with what suspicion he would be regarded if he exchanged so much as a word with a German upon German soil. In Sweden they were made heartily welcome. Hungrily the Russians partook of the Swedish dainties offered them for breakfast; then Lenin took off his hobnailed boots, having bought some new shoes, and a suit of clothes. At length they reached the Russian frontier.

THE PROJECTILE HITS THE TARGET

Lenin's first action on Russian soil was characteristic. Paying no attention to human beings, he flung himself upon the newspapers. It was fourteen years since he had left Russia, since he last saw Russian land, a Russian flag, or a Russian uniform. But this iron ideologist did not, as did the others, shed tears, nor did he, like the

THE SEALED TRAIN

women of the party, sling arms round the soldiers. Newspapers were what he wanted. *Pravda*, above all, to see whether the journal, his journal, was firmly sticking to the internationalist standpoint. Angrily he crumpled the paper and flung it down. Not steadfast enough. Still patriotic tosh; not what he regarded as true-red revolution. "It was time for me to get back," he thought. "Time for me to get my hands upon the wheel, and steer the ship to victory or destruction. . . . Shall I be able?" He was anxious, was disquieted. Would not Milyukoff have him clapped into gaol as soon as he reached St. Petersburg, the city whose name was ere long to be changed? The friends who had come to meet him, Kameneff and Stalin, smiled mysteriously in the third-class compartment, dimly lighted; but they did not answer, or would not answer.

Unprecedented was the answer given by the facts. As the train drew up at the platform of the Finnish station, the huge square outside was packed by workers to the number of tens of thousands, and by troops from all branches of the service who had come to welcome the returned exile. As with one voice, the assembly began to sing *The International*. When Vladimir Ilich Ulyanoff stepped out of the train, the man who two or three days before had lodged at the Zürich cobbler's was seized by hundreds of hands and lifted into an armoured car. Searchlights from the houses and the fortress were concentrated upon him, and from the automobile he made his first speech to the people. The streets quivered with acclamation, nor was it long before the "Ten Days that shook the World" began. The shot had hit the mark, to shatter a realm, a world.

WILSON'S FAILURE



ON December 13, 1918, the great steamship *George Washington* reached Brest, having on board Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America. Never since the beginning of the world had any vessel, any man, been awaited by so many millions and with such ardent hopes. Four long years had the nations been at grips with one another, slaughtering hundreds of thousands of their finest sons with rifles and bayonets, machine-guns and heavy artillery, flame-throwers and poison-gas; and throughout these four years they had volleyed hatred against one another. Nevertheless this frantic excitement had never completely silenced the muted voices from within, which told them that what they did and what they said was absurd, was insane, was a dishonour to our century. The millions of combatants had all the time been animated, consciously or unconsciously, by the inward knowledge that mankind had slipped back into the chaos of a barbarism supposedly left behind for ever.

Then from across the Atlantic, from the New World, had come a voice speaking clearly athwart the still blood-drenched battlefields to say: "No more war." Never again must there be such discords; never again should there be the old and wicked secret diplomacy whereby the nations had been marshalled to the massacre without their knowledge or consent. Instead there would be established a new, a better world-order, "the reign of

WILSON'S FAILURE

law, based upon the consent of the governed and sustained by the organized opinion of mankind." Wonderful to relate, in every country and in every language the voice had instantly been understood. War, which yesterday had been a futile wrestling for territories, for frontiers, for raw materials and markets, for minerals and petroleum, had suddenly acquired a higher, an almost religious significance; had assumed the aspect of a preliminary to perpetual peace, to the Messianic realm of right and of humanity. All at once it seemed as if the blood of the millions had, after all, not been shed in vain; as if this one generation had only suffered that never again should such sorrow be visited upon our earth. By hundreds of thousands, by millions, the voices of those who had become inspired with a frenzy of trust appealed to this one man, Woodrow Wilson, in the hope that he could establish peace between victors and vanquished, that the peace should be a just peace. Wilson, like another Moses, would bring to the war-maddened peoples the tables of a new league. Within a few weeks his name had acquired a religious, a redemptive significance. Streets and buildings and children were named after him. Every nation that was troubled or disadvantaged sent delegates. Letters and telegrams, filled with proposals, requests, and conjurations, assailed him from each of the five continents. They were numbered by thousands upon thousands, so that trunks filled with them were brought to the ship upon which he sailed for Europe. Nay, the whole world came to regard him as the arbiter who would settle its final quarrels before the achievement of the long-desired reconciliation.

Wilson could not resist the call. His friends in America advised him against attending the Peace Conference in person. As President of the United States, they said, duty demanded that he should not leave his country, and should be content to guide the negotiations

from afar. But Woodrow Wilson rejected the counsel. Even the highest office his native land could confer, the Presidency, seemed a trifle when compared with the task that awaited him on the other side of the Atlantic. He was not content with serving one people, one continent; he wished to serve mankind at large: to devote himself, not to this one moment of time, but to the future welfare of the world. He would not narrow his aims to promoting the interests of America, for "interest does not bind men together, interest separates men." No, he would work for the advantage of all. In his own person, he felt, he must see to it that not again should soldiers and diplomatists (whose passing-bell would be rung by one who could ensure the future of mankind) have a chance of inflaming national passions. In his own person he would ensure that "the will of the people rather than of their leaders" should prevail. Every word spoken at the Peace Conference (to be the last of its kind in the world) should be spoken with the doors and windows wide open, and should echo round the globe.

Thus he stood on board the ship and gazed at the European coast which loomed through the mist, vague and formless like his own dream of the coming brotherhood of nations. He stood upright, tall of stature, firm of countenance, his eyes sharp and clear behind his spectacles, his chin prominent like that of other energetic Americans, lips full and fleshy but reserved. Son and grandson of Presbyterian pastors, he had inherited both the strength and the narrowness of those for whom there is only one truth and who are confident that they know it. He had the ardour of all his pious Scottish and Irish ancestors, conjoined with the zealotry given by that Calvinist creed which imposes upon leaders and teachers the task of saving mankind from sin; and incessantly there worked in him the obstinacy of heretics and martyrs who would go to the stake rather than yield a

WILSON'S FAILURE

jot of what they conceived themselves to have learned from the Bible. For him, the democrat, the man of learning, the concepts "humanity," "mankind," "liberty," "freedom," "human rights," were no empty words, but articles of faith, which he would defend syllable by syllable as his forefathers had defended the Gospel. Many battles had he fought. Now, as the ship drew nearer to the coast of Europe and the outlines grew more distinct, he was approaching the land where the decisive issue was to be faced. Involuntarily he tensed his muscles, determined "to fight for the new order, agreeably if we can, disagreeably if we must."

Soon, however, the rigidity faded from the countenance of one whose gaze was directed into the distance. The guns and banners which greeted him as he steamed into Brest harbour were not only thundering and waving a formal welcome to the President of the United States, an allied republic, for from the masses on the shore came shouts of acclamation which voiced something more than a pre-arranged, an organized reception, something more than prescribed jubilation. What greeted him was the flaming enthusiasm of a whole people. As he sat in the train speeding towards the metropolis, from every village, every hamlet, every house, flags waved and hopes radiated. Hands were stretched towards him, cheers acclaimed him. Then, as he drove up the Champs Elysées, cascades of the same enthusiasm were pouring down the living walls. The people of Paris, the people of France, symbolizing all the distant peoples of Europe, were shouting, were rejoicing, were overflowing with expectancy. More and more did his features relax. A free, a happy, an almost entrancing smile disclosed his teeth. He waved his hat to right and to left, as if wishing to greet them all, to greet the whole world. Assuredly he had done well to come in person, for only the living will can triumph over the rigidity of law. So happy a

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

town, so hopeful a populace—how could he fail to fulfil their wishes now and for all time? A night's rest, and on the morrow he would get promptly to work, giving the world that peace of which it had dreamed for thousands of years, thus doing the greatest deed that any mortal had ever done.

In front of the palace which the French Government had got ready for him, in the passages of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in front of the Hôtel Crillon, the headquarters of the American delegation, the journalists (an army in themselves) were athrong with impatience. A hundred and fifty of them had come from America alone; every country, every important town had sent a representative of the Press, and these knights of the pen were eagerly demanding cards of entry to every sitting—yes, to every sitting of the Conference. Had not the world been assured that there would be "complete publicity"? This time there were to be no secret meetings, no secret conclaves. Word for word ran the first sentence of the famous Fourteen Points: "Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind." The pestilence of secret treaties, which has caused more deaths than all other epidemics taken together, was to be definitely abolished by the new serum of Wilsonian "open diplomacy."

But the impetuous journalists were disappointed by encountering insuperable reserve. "Oh, yes, you will all be admitted to the big sittings." The reports of these public sittings (which would have really been purged beforehand of all possibilities of manifest tension) would be given in full to the world. But no further information could be given as yet. The rules of procedure would have to be drawn up first. The peeved Pressmen could not fail to become aware that something rather in-

WILSON'S FAILURE

harmonious must be going on behind the scenes. Still, what they had been told was true enough. The rules of procedure were being drawn up. It was in connection with this matter that President Wilson realized from the first utterance of the "Big Four" that the Allies were in league against him. They did not wish to put all their cards on the table—and for good reason. In the portfolios and pigeon-holes of all the belligerent nations were secret treaties which provided that each should get a "fair share" of the loot. In fact there was a good deal of dirty linen which it would be most indiscreet to wash in public. To avoid discrediting the Conference at the very outset, therefore, it would be essential to discuss these matters and have a preliminary "wash" behind closed doors. Besides, there were more deep-seated causes of disharmony than those which were concerned with mere rules of procedure. Each of the two groups was, within itself, clear enough and harmonious enough as to what it wanted: the Americans on one side, and the Europeans on the other. The Conference had to make, not one peace, but two. One of them was temporal, was actual, to end the war against the Germans, who had laid down their arms. The other was problematical, was eternal not temporal, being a peace designed to make war impossible for evermore. The temporal peace was to be harsh and merciless after the old pattern. The eternal peace was to be a new one, embodying the Wilsonian Covenant of the League of Nations. Which of the two was to be discussed first?

Here the two views came into sharp conflict. Wilson had little interest in the temporal peace. The outlining of the new frontiers, the payment of war-indemnities or reparations, were, he considered, matters for experts and committees to decide in strict accordance with the principles laid down in the Fourteen Points. These were minor tasks, *parerga*, jobs for specialists. What the lead-

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

ing statesmen of all nations had to do was to get to work upon the new task of creation, to bring the countries together in unity, to establish perpetual peace. Each group was convinced of the extreme urgency of the peace it desired. The European Allies insisted, and justly, that it would never do to keep a world that had been exhausted and bled white by four years of war waiting many months to learn the conditions of peace. This would bring chaos upon Europe. First the pressing problems must be solved. The frontiers must be outlined, and the reparations specified; the men who were still under arms must be sent back to their wives and children; the currencies must be stabilized; trade and traffic must be set agoing once more. After that, when the world had been steadied, it would be possible to allow the Fata Morgana of the Wilsonian schemes to shine tranquilly upon it. Just as Wilson was not really interested in the actual peace, so Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Sonnino, being adroit tacticians and very practical statesmen, were little interested in what Wilson aimed at. In part from political calculation, and in part from genuine sympathy and humanist demands and ideals, they had expressed a general approval of the proposed League of Nations, for, consciously or unconsciously, they had been stirred by the force of an unselfish principle that came from the very hearts of their respective nations, and were ready to discuss his plan, with certain mitigations and provisos of their own. But first the peace with Germany must be settled, to conclude the war; then only could the Covenant be discussed.

Wilson himself, however, was sufficiently practical to know that repeated procrastination can deprive a demand of its impetus. A man does not become President of the United States through idealism, and his own experience had taught him how dilatoriness in replying is a weapon

WILSON'S FAILURE

whereby a vexatious heckler can be disarmed. For this reason he insisted unhesitatingly that the first matter to be considered was the elaboration of the Covenant, which would have to be incorporated word by word in the peace treaty with Germany. A second conflict inevitably resulted from this demand. The Allies' view was that the acceptance of such a method would involve the exculpation of Germany, though Germany, by her invasion of Belgium, had brutally defied international law, and at Brest-Litovsk had, with General Hoffmann's hammer-blow of the fist, given an atrocious example of ruthless dictatorship. Was she at this early stage to reap the unmerited reward of the coming humanitarianism? No, let debts be settled first in the old way, with hard cash. Then the new system could be introduced. Fields had been laid waste; towns had been battered to fragments. Let President Wilson inspect them. Then he would see that damages had to be made good. But Wilson, the "impracticable man," deliberately looked beyond the ruins. His eyes were fixed on the future, and instead of the ruined buildings of to-day he could see only the edifice of the future. He had but one task, "to do away with an old order and establish a new one." Unflinchingly, stubbornly, he persisted in his demand, notwithstanding the protests of his own advisers, Lansing and House. The Covenant first, Settle the affairs of mankind at large to begin with; then deal with the interests of particular peoples.

The struggle was arduous, and (this was disastrous) it cut into a great deal of time. Unfortunately Wilson had not, before crossing the Atlantic, given his dream a solid configuration. His project for the Covenant was not definitive, was only a "first draft," which had to be discussed in countless sittings; had to be modified, improved, fortified—or toned down. Furthermore, cour-

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

tesy demanded that, having come to Paris, he should as soon as possible visit the chief towns of the other Allies. Wilson crossed the Channel, went to London, spoke in Manchester, returned to the Continent, took train to Rome. Since during his absence the other statesmen did not devote their best energies to furthering the Covenant, more than a month was lost before the first "plenary session" could be held. Meanwhile in Hungary, Rumania, Poland, and the Baltic States, also on the Dalmatian frontier, regular troops and volunteers engaged in skirmishes and occupied territories, while in Vienna famine threatened, and in Russia the situation was growing more and more alarming.

Even at this first "plenary session," held on January 18, 1919, no more was achieved than to formulate a theoretical decision that the Covenant was to be "an integral part of the general treaty of peace." Still remaining nebulous, still amid interminable discussions, it wandered from hand to hand, was continually edited and re-edited. Another month passed—a month of terrible unrest for Europe, which more and more impetuously demanded a veritable peace. Not until February 14, 1919, more than three months after the armistice, was Wilson able to produce the Covenant in its definitive form, when it was unanimously adopted.

Once more the world was jubilant. Wilson's cause had triumphed. Henceforth the road to peace would not lead through warfare and terror, for peace was to be ensured by mutual agreement and by faith in the reign of law. He received an ovation as he left the palace. Once more, and for the last time, he contemplated with a proud, thankful, happy smile the crowd which had thronged thither to acclaim him. Behind this crowd he glimpsed other crowds, other peoples; behind this one generation which had suffered so intensely he

WILSON'S FAILURE

could picture future generations, the generations of those who, thanks to the safeguard of the Covenant, would no longer feel the scourge of war, would no longer know the humiliation of dictatorships. It was the crowning day of his life, and the last of his happy days. For Wilson frustrated his own victory by triumphing prematurely, and quitting the battlefield without delay. On the morrow, February 15, he began the return voyage to America where he would present his electors and fellow-countrymen with the Magna Charta of perpetual peace before coming back to Europe to sign the treaty that would close the last war.

Salutes were fired again as the *George Washington* steamed away from Brest, but the crowds that assembled to bid him farewell were smaller and less enthusiastic than those which had greeted his arrival. By the time when Wilson left Europe the passionate tension had begun to relax, the Messianic hopes of the nations to subside. When he reached New York his reception was likewise cool. No aeroplanes were soaring to greet the homeward-bound vessel; there were no storms of acclamation; and from the public offices, from the Senate, from Congress, from his own political party, from his fellow-citizens, the President received no more than a half-hearted welcome. Europe was dissatisfied because Wilson had not gone far enough; America, because he had gone too far. To Europe the linkage of conflicting interests into one great interest of mankind seemed inadequately accomplished. In America his political adversaries, who were already thinking of the next presidential election, declared that without warrant he had attached the New World too closely to restless and incalculable Europe, thus running counter to the Monroe Doctrine, one of the basic principles of United States policy. Woodrow Wilson was imperatively reminded that his business as President was not to found a future

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

realm of dreams, not to promote the welfare of foreign nations, but primarily to consider the advantage of the U.S. citizens who had elected him to represent their will. Wilson, therefore, though fatigued by his European negotiations, had now to undertake fresh discussions with the members of his own party and with his political opponents. Above all, he was mortified by a demand that there should be introduced into the splendid structure of the Covenant, which he had regarded as finished and inviolable, a back door of escape for his own country, the dangerous "provision for the withdrawal of America from the League." Thus whereas he had fancied the edifice of the League of Nations firmly erected for all time, he now found that a breach was to be made in the wall, an ominous breach that would in time lead to a general collapse.

Despite limitations and corrections, in America as in Europe, Wilson was able to secure the acceptance of his Magna Charta of mankind. But it was only half a victory, and when he set sail once more for Europe to do the second half of his work as one of the leading members of the Peace Conference, it was no longer with the free-hearted and sublime self-satisfaction with which he had originally set out. Nor did he contemplate the coast of Europe in the same hopeful spirit. He had aged considerably during these weeks, was weary and disappointed. His face was pinched and strained; harsh and sour lines were forming round his mouth; occasionally twitching movements of the left cheek were visible. These were the heralds of storm, signs of the oncoming illness which was soon to strike him down. The physician who accompanied him missed no chance of warning him against overstrain. A fresh, perhaps even harder struggle awaited him. He knew it was more difficult to carry principles into effect than to formulate them in the abstract. But he was resolved that on no account would

WILSON'S FAILURE

he sacrifice so much as a tittle of his programme. All or nothing. Perpetual peace, or no peace at all.

No ovation on landing, no ovation in the streets of Paris; the Press was coldly expectant; people seemed dubious and mistrustful. Goethe's saying that enthusiasm is not adapted for prolonged storage was once more confirmed. Instead of striking the iron while it was hot and malleable, Wilson had allowed European idealism to grow cold and stiff. His one month's absence had changed everything. Lloyd George had simultaneously quitted the Conference. Clemenceau, having been wounded by a pistol bullet in an attempt on his life, had been laid up for a fortnight, and during this unguarded moment the advocates of private interests had seized the chance of forcing their way into the committee-rooms. Most energetic and most dangerous were the soldiers. Marshals and generals, who for four years had been in the limelight, whose arbitrary decisions had been the law to hundreds of thousands, were by no means disposed to take a back seat now. A Covenant which would deprive them of their armies, since it was going "to abolish conscription and all other forms of compulsory military service," was a threat to their very existence. The tomfoolery about perpetual peace, this twaddling onslaught on their profession, must be abolished, or at least side-tracked. What they wanted was more armaments instead of Wilsonian disarmament, new frontiers and material guarantees instead of the watchword of internationalism. Not by Fourteen Points written in the air would it be possible to safeguard a country, but only if that country multiplied its own defences and disarmed its adversaries. On the heels of the militarists came the representatives of the industrial groups; the munition-makers, who were also interested in armaments; the brokers, who hoped to make money out of reparations.

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

Alert, too, were the diplomatists, each of whom, threatened in the back by the opposition parties, wanted to secure for his country a big area of newly annexed territory. A few adroit touches upon the keyboard of public opinion had resulted in all the European newspapers, ably scconded by those of America, voicing the same theme: "Wilson's fantastic schemes retard the peace settlement. His utopian plans—praiseworthy of course, and most idealistic—check the consolidation of Europe. Don't let us squander any more time upon moral considerations and super-moral reveries. Unless peace is signed quickly, Europe will be in chaos once more."

Unhappily these complaints were justifiable. Wilson, who looked ahead for centuries, had his own standards of measurement which were different from those of the nations of contemporary Europe. Four or five months seemed to him very little time for a task which was to realize what had been a dream for thousands of years. But meanwhile in Eastern Europe volunteers organized by dark forces were marching hither and thither, occupying undefended territories, and whole regions did not know to whom they belonged or were going to belong. Though four months had slipped away, the German and Austrian delegations had not yet been received. On the other side of frontiers that were still vague, the peoples were growing restless; nor were signs lacking that in despair Hungary to-morrow and Germany the day after would probably outdo the Bolsheviks in the way of revolution. Let us settle matters quickly, urged the diplomats. To clear the ground we must sweep away whatever might be a hindrance—above all, this infernal Covenant.

A single hour in Paris was enough to show Wilson that all he had laboriously constructed in three months had been undermined during his month's absence, and was

WILSON'S FAILURE

in danger of crashing to the ground. Marshal Foch had almost managed to arrange that the Covenant should be expunged from the peace treaty, and in that case the work of the first three months would be annihilated. But where decisive matters were at stake, Wilson could be adamant, and he would not budge an inch. Next day, March 15, he secured an official announcement in the Press that the resolution of January 25 was still in force, and that "the Covenant is to be an integral part of the treaty of peace." This declaration was the first counter-thrust against the attempt to make the peace treaty with Germany, not upon the basis of the new Covenant, but upon that of the old secret treaties between the Allies. President Wilson was now fully enlightened. He knew that the very powers which had so recently declared themselves prepared to respect the peoples' right of self-determination, really intended to make demands incompatible with such a right. France would claim Rhineland and the Saar; Italy would claim Fiume and Dalmatia; Rumania, Poland, and Czechoslovakia would all want a share of the loot. Unless he armed for resistance, the peace would, as of old, be made in the way he had condemned, the way of Napoleon, Talleyrand, and Metternich; not in accordance with the principles he had advocated, and which the Allies had solemnly pledged themselves to observe.

A fortnight passed in fierce struggles. Wilson strongly opposed the cession of the Saar to France, feeling that this first infringement of the principle of self-determination would become a precedent for many more; and Italy, convinced that her own demands were implicit in France's demand for the Saar, threatened to quit the Conference unless Wilson gave way. The French Press began to raise a clamour; there had been an outbreak of Bolshevism in Hungary, and soon, said the Allies, the poison would spread to the West. Wilson was opposed

THE TIDE OF FORTUNE

even by his own advisers, Colonel House and Robert Lansing. Though they were his good friends, they urgently advised him, in view of the chaotic conditions that prevailed in Europe, to sacrifice a few of his idealistic aims in order that the other peace could be signed as speedily as possible. In fact, Wilson stood alone against a unanimously hostile front. From America he was attacked in the rear by public opinion, which was fanned by his political adversaries and rivals, and often enough Wilson felt he had reached the end of the tether. He admitted to a friend that he could not possibly continue to hold his own against all the others, and said that he had determined to leave the Conference unless he could carry his point.

While thus engaged against such heavy odds, he was laid low by an enemy from within. On April 3, when the fight between crude realities and a still unattained ideal was nearing its climax, he was unable to keep upright any longer, and—a man of sixty-three—had to take to his bed with influenza. The onslaughts from the outer world were even more formidable than those of his fevered blood, and gave him no rest. Catastrophic tidings came to hand. On April 5 the Communists rose to power in Bavaria, for a Soviet Republic was established in Munich. At any moment Austria, hunger-stricken and midway between a Bolshevik Bavaria and a Bolshevik Austria, seemed likely to take the same course, and every additional hour of resistance might make this lone fighter Wilson responsible for the spread of red revolution. The invalid's adversaries would leave him no peace on his sick-bed. In the next room Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Colonel House were discussing matters, being all agreed that an end must be reached at any cost. The cost would have to be paid by Wilson with his demands and his ideals. His claim for a perpetual peace would have to stand over, since it was an

WILSON'S FAILURE

obstacle to the more immediate need, that of an urgent settlement of the "real," the military, the material peace.

But Wilson, exhausted, a sick man, irritated by the clamour in the Press, which blamed him for blocking the way to peace, forsaken by his own advisers, and deaved by the representatives of the other Governments, still would not give way. He felt that he must keep his pledged word; that he would not have done his utmost on behalf of the peace the others so much wanted unless he brought it into harmony with the non-military, the lasting, the future peace, unless he continued to do his utmost on behalf of the "world federation" which was the only thing that could really establish the perpetual peace of Europe. Hardly had he risen from his bed than he took a decisive step. On April 7 he sent a cablegram to the Navy Department in Washington: "What is the earliest possible date U.S.S. *George Washington* can sail for Brest France and what is probable earliest date of arrival Brest? President desires movements this vessel expedited." The same day the world was informed that President Wilson had cabled for the steamer by which he was to depart.

The news came like a thunderclap, whose meaning was instantly understood. All over the globe it became known that President Wilson was determined to oppose any peace settlement that should in the slightest degree infringe the principles of the Covenant, and had resolved to quit the Conference rather than yield. A fateful hour had struck, one which would for decades, for centuries, settle the destinies of Europe, of the world at large. If Wilson left the Conference table, the old order of society would collapse, chaos would begin—but perhaps it would be the chaos out of which a new star is born. Europe looked on impatiently. Would the other mem-

bers of the Conference take such a responsibility? Would Wilson himself take it? A fateful hour.

A fateful hour. At the moment Wilson was still firmly resolved. He would not compromise; he would not yield; there should not be "a hard peace," but "the just peace." The French should not have the Saar; the Italians should not have Fiume; Turkey should not be partitioned; there should be no "bartering of peoples." Right should prevail over might, the ideal over the real, the future over the present. *Fiat justitia, pereat mundus.* This brief hour would be the greatest, the most perfectly human, the most heroic in Wilson's life. If he only should have courage to stand firm, his name would be immortalized among the rare true lovers of mankind, and he would have done an unexampled deed. But the hour was followed by a week, and during this week he was assailed from all sides. The French, the British, the Italian Press attacked him—him, εἰρηνοποιός, the peace-maker—for destroying the peace by his theoretico-theological obstinacy, and for sacrificing the real world to a private utopia. Even Germany, which had looked to him as the main source of help but had been alarmed by the outbreak of Bolshevism in Bavaria, now turned against him. So did his fellow-countrymen. Colonel House and Lansing adjured him to give way. Even State Secretary Tumulty, who a few days before had encouragingly cabled, "Only a bold stroke by the President will save Europe and perhaps the world," now, when Wilson was making the "bold stroke," was much perturbed, and cabled again, "Withdrawal most unwise and fraught with most dangerous possibilities here and abroad. . . . President should place the responsibility for a break of the Conference where it properly belongs. . . . A withdrawal at this time would be a desertion."

Harassed, almost desperate, and with his self-confidence impaired by the universality of dissent, Wilson

WILSON'S FAILURE

looked around. No one sided with him, everyone in the Conference hall was against him—even the members of his own staff; and the voices of the invisible millions upon millions, who from a distance were imploring him to be firm, to abide by his own principles, did not reach his ears. He never realized that if he should act as he had threatened, and withdraw from the Conference, his name would be immortalized; but that only if he was steadfast would he bequeath his idea to the future as a postulate to be perpetually renewed. He had no inkling what creative energy would issue from his saying "No" to the forces of greed, hatred, and unreason. All he could feel was that he was alone, and that he was too weak to shoulder the responsibility. The disastrous upshot was that President Wilson became less stubbornly resistant, while Colonel House built a bridge on which he could make compromises. The bargaining about the frontiers went on for a week. At length, on April 15, 1919—a black day in history—with a heavy heart and an uneasy conscience, Wilson agreed to the considerably abated militarist demands of Clemenceau. The Saar was not to become permanently French, but only for fifteen years. The first compromise was made by the man who had hitherto been uncompromising, and thereupon, as if a magician's wand had been waved, the tone of the Parisian Press was utterly different next morning. The newspapers, which the day before had railed at him as a disturber of the peace, as a man who was ruining the world, extolled him as the wisest of living statesmen. But this praise seared him like a reproach. At the bottom of his soul Wilson knew that though he had perhaps saved the peace, the temporal peace, the permanent peace in a spirit of reconciliation, the only peace that could save the world, had been lost or thrown away. Folly had overcome good sense, passion had prevailed against reason. Man had been thrust back into an evil past.

He, who had been the leader and banner-bearer in the advance towards an ideal that should transcend time, had lost the supreme battle, in which he needed first of all to conquer his own weakness.

Did Wilson act rightly or wrongly in this fateful hour? Who can tell? At any rate, on a momentous and irrevocable day, he made a decision whose fruit will outlast decades and centuries, and which we and our descendants will have to pay for with our blood, our despair, our impotence, and our destruction. From this day Wilson's power, which had been morally unrivalled, was broken, his prestige and energy were annulled. He who makes one concession, cannot stop there. A compromise inevitably leads to further compromises. Dishonour creates dishonour, force begets force. Peace, which Wilson had visioned as integral and lasting, remains fragmentary, transient, and incomplete, because it was not fashioned in the sense of the future, was not moulded out of the spirit of humanity, was not constructed of the materials of pure reason. A unique opportunity, perhaps the most fateful in history, was pitifully squandered, as the world, whose gods had been broken, soon realized in the bitterness of disappointment and confusion. When Wilson returned home, he who had been acclaimed as the saviour of the world was no longer regarded by anyone as a redeemer. He was nothing more than a weary and elderly invalid, doomed to a speedy death. Jubilation no longer greeted him, nor did flags wave at his coming. As the ship steamed away from the coast of Kniope, he averted his face, for he could not look back at our unhappy continent which for thousands of years had longed for peace and unity, and had never found them. Once again there vanished in the haze of distance the everlasting dream of a humanized world.

